This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

L0.9 2m
1869
a
v.5

B20.92
M864
a
v.5

LAMB

By ALFRED AINGER

ADDISON

By W. J. COURTHOPE

SWIFT

By LESLIE STEPHEN

London
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1895

[redacted]

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

CHARLES LAMB

C

CHARLES LAMB

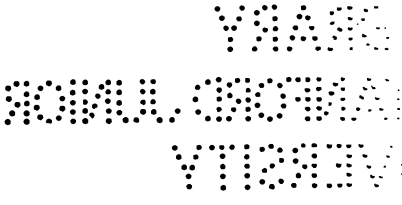
BY

ALFRED AINGER

London
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1903

All rights reserved

First Edition 1882
Reprinted 1883, 1888, 1893, 1899, 1903



PREFATORY NOTE.

THE writings of Charles Lamb abound in biographical matter. To them, and to the well-known volumes of the late Mr. Justice Talfourd, I am mainly indebted for the material of which this memoir is composed.

I have added a complete list of the chief works from which information about Lamb and his sister has been obtained. I have also had the advantage of communication with those who were personally acquainted with Lamb and have received from others valuable assistance in exploring less known sources of information.

Among those to whom my acknowledgments for much kindness are due, I would mention Mrs. Arthur Tween, a daughter of that old and loyal friend of the Lamb family, Mr. Randal Norris; Mr. James Crossley, of Manchester; Mr. Edward FitzGerald; Mr. W. Aldis Wright; and last, not least, my friend Mr. J. E. Davis, of the Middle Temple, whose kind interest in this little book has been unfailing.

A. A.

HAMPSTEAD,
December, 1881.

900 23

AUTHORITIES CONSULTED.

1. The Essays of Elia, and other writings, in prose and verse, of Charles Lamb.
2. Letters of Charles Lamb, with a Sketch of his Life by Thomas Noon Talfourd 1837
3. Final Memorials of Charles Lamb, &c., by Thomas Noon Talfourd 1848
4. Charles Lamb: A Memoir, by Barry Cornwall . . 1866
5. Charles and Mary Lamb: Poems, Letters, and Remains, by W. Carew Hazlitt 1874
6. Gillman's Life of Coleridge, vol. i. 1838
7. Cottle's Early Recollections of Coleridge . . . 1837
8. Alsop's Letters, Conversations, and Recollections of Coleridge 1836
9. My Friends and Acquaintance, by P. G. Patmore . 1854
10. Autobiography of Leigh Hunt 1850
11. Memoirs of William Hazlitt, by W. Carew Hazlitt . 1867
12. Literary Reminiscences, by Thomas Hood (in *Hood's Own*) 1839
13. Haydon's Autobiography and Journals 1853
14. Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson 1869
15. Memoir of Charles Mathews (the elder), by Mrs. Mathews 1838
16. Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey . . 1849
17. Obituary Notices, Reminiscences, Essays, &c., in various magazines and reviews.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	DATE.	PAGE
BOYHOOD—THE TEMPLE AND CHRIST'S HOSPITAL	1775—1789 .	1

CHAPTER II.

FAMILY STRUGGLES AND SORROWS . . .	1789—1796 .	17

CHAPTER III.

FIRST EXPERIMENTS IN LITERATURE . .	1796—1800	34

CHAPTER IV.

DRAMATIC AUTHORSHIP AND DRAMATIC CRITICISM	1800—1809 .	50

CHAPTER V.

INNER TEMPLE LANE—PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS	1809—1817 .	74

CHAPTER VI.

RUSSELL STREET, COVENT GARDEN—THE ESSAYS OF ELIA	1817—1823 .	96

CHAPTER VII.

	DATE	PAGE
COLEBROOK ROW, ISLINGTON—THE CONTROVERSY WITH SOUTHEY, AND RETIREMENT FROM THE INDIA HOUSE	1823—1826	125

CHAPTER VIII.

ENFIELD AND EDMONTON	1826—1834	150

CHAPTER IX.

LAMB'S PLACE AS A CRITIC	172

INDEX	187

CHARLES LAMB

CHAPTER VII.

	DATE	PAGE
COLEBROOK ROW, ISLINGTON—THE CONTROVERSY WITH SOUTHEY, AND RETIREMENT FROM THE INDIA HOUSE	1823—1826	125

CHAPTER VIII.

ENFIELD AND EDMONTON	1826—1834	150

CHAPTER IX.

LAMB'S PLACE AS A CRITIC		172
INDEX		187

CHARLES LAMB

CHARLES LAMB.

CHAPTER I.

BOYHOOD—THE TEMPLE AND CHRIST'S HOSPITAL.

(1775—1789.)

"I WAS born and passed the first seven years of my life in the Temple. Its church, its halls, its gardens, its fountain, its river, I had almost said—for in those young years what was this king of rivers to me but a stream that watered our pleasant places?—these are of my oldest recollections." In this manner does Charles Lamb, in an essay that is one of the masterpieces of English prose, open for us those passages of autobiography which happily abound in his writings. The words do more than fix places and dates. They strike the key in which his early life was set—and the later life, hardly less. The genius of Lamb was surely guided into its special channel by the chance that the first fourteen years of his life were passed, as has been said, "between cloister and cloister," between the mediæval atmosphere of the quiet Temple and that of the busy school of Edward VI.

Charles Lamb was born on the 10th of February, 1775 in Crown Office Row in the Temple, the line of buildings

facing the garden and the river he has so lovingly commemorated. His father, John Lamb, who had come up a country boy from Lincolnshire to seek his fortune in the great city, was clerk and servant to Mr. Samuel Salt, a Bencher of the Inner Temple. He had married Elizabeth Field, whose mother was for more than fifty years housekeeper at the old mansion of the Plumers, Blakesware in Hertfordshire, the Blakesmoor of the *Essays of Elia*. The issue of this marriage was a family of seven children, only three of whom seem to have survived their early childhood. The registers of the Temple Church record the baptisms of all the seven children, ranging from the year 1762 to 1775. Of the three who lived, Charles was the youngest. The other two were his brother John, who was twelve years, and his sister Mary Anne (better known to us as Mary), who was ten years his senior. The marked difference in age between Charles and his brother and sister, must never be overlooked in the estimate of the difficulties, and of the heroism, of his later life.

In the essay already cited—that on the *Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*—Charles has drawn for us a touching portrait of his father, the barrister's clerk, under the name of Lovel. After speaking of Samuel Salt, the Bencher, and certain indolent and careless ways from which he "might have suffered severely if he had not had honest people about him," he digresses characteristically into a description of the faithful servant who was at hand to protect him :—

> Lovel took care of everything. He was at once his clerk, his good servant, his dresser, his friend, his "flapper," his guide, stop-watch, auditor, treasurer. He did nothing without consulting Lovel, or failed in anything without expecting and fearing his

admonishing. He put himself almost too much in his hands, had they not been the purest in the world. He resigned his title almost to respect as a master, if Lovel could ever have forgotten for a moment that he was a servant.

I knew this Lovel. He was a man of an incorrigible and losing honesty. A good fellow withal, and "would strike." In the cause of the oppressed he never considered inequalities, or calculated the number of his opponents. He once wrested a sword out of the hand of a man of quality that had drawn upon him, and pommelled him severely with the hilt of it. The swordsman had offered insult to a female—an occasion upon which no odds against him could have prevented the interference of Lovel. He would stand next day bare-headed to the same person, modestly to excuse his interference, for Lovel never forgot rank, where something better was not concerned. Lovel was the liveliest little fellow breathing; had a face as gay as Garrick's, whom he was said greatly to resemble (I have a portrait of him which confirms it); possessed a fine turn for humorous poetry—next to Swift and Prior; moulded heads in clay or plaster of Paris to admiration, by the dint of natural genius merely; turned cribbage-boards, and such small cabinet toys, to perfection; took a hand at quadrille or bowls with equal facility; made punch better than any man of his degree in England; had the merriest quips and conceits, and was altogether as brimful of rogueries and inventions as you could desire. He was a brother of the angle, moreover, and just such a free, hearty, honest companion as Mr. Izaak Walton would have chosen to go a-fishing with.

I saw him in his old age, and the decay of his faculties, palsy-smitten, in the last sad stage of human weakness—"a remnant most forlorn of what he was"—yet even then his eye would light up upon the mention of his favourite Garrick. He was greatest, he would say, in Bayes—"was upon the stage nearly throughout the whole performance, and as busy as a bee." At intervals, too, he would speak of his former life, and how he came up a little boy from Lincoln to go to service, and how his mother cried at parting with him, and how he returned after

some few years' absence in his smart new livery, to see her, and she blessed herself at the change and could hardly be brought to believe that it was "her own bairn." And then, the excitement subsiding, he would weep, till I have wished that sad second-childhood might have a mother still to lay its head upon her lap. But the common mother of us all in no long time after received him gently into hers.

I have digressed, in my turn, from the story of Charles Lamb's own life, but it is not without interest to learn from whom Charles inherited, not only something of his versatility of gift, but his chivalry and tenderness.

The household in Crown Office Row were from the beginning poor—of that we may feel certain. An aunt of Charles, his father's sister, formed one of the family, and contributed something to the common income, but John Lamb the elder was the only other bread-winner. And a barrister's clerk with seven children born to him in a dozen years, even if lodging were found him, could not have had much either to save or to spend. Before seven years of age Charles got the rudiments of education from a Mr. William Bird, whose schoolroom looked "into a discoloured dingy garden in the passage leading from Fetter Lane into Bartlett's Buildings." We owe this, and some other curious information about the academy, to a letter of Lamb's addressed in 1826 to Hone, the editor of the *Every Day Book*. In that periodical had appeared an account of a certain Captain Starkey, who was for some time an assistant of Bird's. The mention of his old teacher's name in this connexion called up in Lamb many recollections of his earliest school-days, and produced the letter just named, full of characteristic matter. The school, out of Fetter Lane, was a day-school for boys, and an evening school for girls, and Charles and Mary had

the advantages, whatever they may have been, of its instruction. Starkey had spoken of Bird as "an eminent writer, and teacher of languages and mathematics," &c.; upon which Lamb's comment is, "Heaven knows what languages were taught in it then! I am sure that neither my sister nor myself brought any out of it but a little of our native English." Then follow some graphic descriptions of the birch and the ferule, as wielded by Mr. Bird, and other incidents of school-life :—

> Oh, how I remember our legs wedged into those uncomfortable sloping desks, where we sat elbowing each other; and the injunctions to attain a free hand, unattainable in that position; the first copy I wrote after, with its moral lesson, "Art improves nature;" the still earlier pot-hooks and the hangers, some traces of which I fear may yet be apparent in this manuscript.

When Charles had absorbed such elementary learning as was to be acquired under Mr. Bird and his assistants, his father might have been much perplexed where to find an education for his younger son, within his slender means, and yet satisfying his natural ambition, had not a governor of Christ's Hospital, of the name of Yeates, probably a friend of Samuel Salt, offered him a presentation to that admirable charity. And on the 9th of October, 1782, Charles Lamb, then in his eighth year, entered the institution, and remained there for the next seven years.

There is scarcely any portion of his life about which Lamb has not himself taken his readers into his confidence, and in his essay on *Witches and other Night-fears* he has referred to his own sensitive and superstitious childhood, made more sensitive by the books, meat too strong for childish digestion, to which he had free access in his father's collection. "I was dreadfully alive to nervous

terrors. The night-time solitude and the dark were my hell. The sufferings I endured in this nature would justify the expression. I never laid my head on my pillow, I suppose, from the fourth to the seventh or eighth year of my life—so far as memory serves in things so long ago—without an assurance, which realized its own prophecy, of seeing some frightful spectre." Lamb was fond both of exaggeration and of mystification, as we shall see further on, but this account of his childhood is not inconsistent with descriptions of it from other sources. There was a strain of mental excitability in all the family, and in the case of Charles the nervousness of childhood was increased by the impediment in his speech which remained with him for life, and made so curious a part of his unique personality. "He was an amiable, gentle boy," wrote one who had been at school with him, "very sensible and keenly observing, indulged by his school-fellows and by his master on account of his infirmity of speech. I never heard his name mentioned," adds this same school-fellow, Charles Valentine Le Grice, "without the addition of Charles, although, as there was no other boy of the name of Lamb, the addition was unnecessary; but there was an implied kindness in it, and it was a proof that his gentle manners excited that kindness." Let us note here that this term "gentle" (the special epithet of Shakspeare) seems to have occurred naturally to all Lamb's friends, as that which best described him. Coleridge, Wordsworth, Landor, and Cary, recall no trait more tenderly than this. And let us note also that the addition of his Christian name (Lamb loved the use of it: "So Christians," he said, "should call one another") followed him through life and beyond it. There is perhaps no other English writer who is so seldom mentioned by his surname alone.

Of Lamb's experience of school-life we are fortunate in having a full description in his essay, entitled *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, published in 1818, and the sequel to it, called *Christ's Hospital five-and-thirty years ago* (one of the *Elia* essays), published two years later. But it requires some familiarity with Lamb's love of masquerading, already referred to, to disengage fact from fancy, and extract what refers to himself only, in these two papers. The former is, what it purports to be, a serious tribute of praise to the dignified and elevating character of the great Charity by which he had been fostered. It speaks chiefly of the young scholar's pride in the antiquity of the foundation and the monastic customs and ritual which had survived into modern times; of the Founder, "that godly and royal child, King Edward VI., the flower of the Tudor name—the young flower that was untimely cropped, as it began to fill our land with its early odours—the boy-patron of boys—the serious and holy child who walked with Cranmer and Ridley," with many touching reminiscences of the happy days spent in country excursions or visits to the sights of London. But in calling up these recollections it seems to have struck Lamb that his old school, like other institutions, had more than one side, and that the grievances of schoolboys, real and imaginary, as well as the humorous side of some of the regulations and traditions of the school, might supply material for another picture not less interesting. Accordingly, under the disguise of the signature *Elia*, he wrote a second account of his school, purporting to be a corrective of the over-colouring employed by "Mr. Lamb" in the former account. The writer affects to be a second witness called in to supplement the evidence of the first. "I remember L. at school," writes Lamb, under the signature of *Elia*.

"It happens very oddly that my own standing at Christ's was nearly corresponding to his; and with all gratitude to him for his enthusiasm for the cloisters, I think he has contrived to bring together whatever can be said in praise of them, dropping all the other side of the argument most ingeniously." This other side Lamb proceeds, with charming humour, to set forth, and he does so in the character of one, a "poor friendless boy," whose parents were far away at "sweet Calne, in Wiltshire," after which his heart was ever yearning. The friendless boy whose personality is thus assumed, was young Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who had entered the school the same year as Lamb, though three years his senior. Coleridge and Lamb were schoolfellows for the whole seven years of the latter's residence, and from this early association arose a friendship as memorable as any in English Literature. "Sweet Calne, in Wiltshire," was thus one of Lamb's innocent mystifications. It was to the old home at "sweet Ottery St. Mary," in Devonshire, that young Samuel Taylor's thoughts turned, when he took his lonely country rambles, or shivered at the cold windows of the print-shops to while away a winter's holiday.

In the character of Coleridge—though even here the dramatic position is not strictly sustained—Lamb goes on to relate, in the third person, many incidents of his own boyish life, which differed of necessity from his friend's. Charles Lamb was not troubled how to get through a winter's day, for he had shelter and friendly faces within easy reach of the school. "He had the privilege of going to see them, almost as often as he wished, through some invidious distinction which was denied to us. The present worthy sub-treasurer to the Inner Temple can explain how that happened. He had his tea and hot rolls

in the morning, while we were battening upon our quarter of a penny-loaf moistened with attenuated small-beer, in wooden piggins, smacking of the pitched leathern jack it was poured from." And the writer proceeds to draw a charming picture of some emissary from Lamb's home, his "maid or aunt," bringing him some home-cooked dainty, and squatting down on "some odd stone in a by-nook of the cloisters," while he partook of it. It suggests a pleasant and happy side to this portion of Charles Lamb's life. Humble as his home was, still home was near, and not unmindful of him; and even taking into account the severities of the discipline and other of the schoolboy's natural grievances, it would seem as if Lamb's school-years had a genial influence on his mind and spirit.

As to the education, in the common acceptation of the word, which he gained during those seven years at Christ's Hospital, we may form a very just notion. When he left the school, in his fifteenth year, in November, 1789, he was (according to his own statement made in more than one passage of his writings) deputy Grecian. Leigh Hunt, who entered the school two years after Lamb quitted it, and knew him intimately in later life, says the same thing. Talfourd seems to have applied to the school authorities for precise information, and gives a somewhat different account. He says that "in the language of the school" he was "in Greek form, but not deputy Grecian." No such distinction is understood by "Blues" of a later date, but it may possibly mean that Lamb was doing deputy Grecians' work, though he was in some way technically disqualified from taking rank with them. "He had read," Talfourd goes on to tell us, "Virgil, Sallust, Terence, Lucian, and Xenophon, and had evinced

considerable skill in the niceties of Latin composition." Latin, not Greek, was certainly his strong point, and with Terence especially he shows a familiar acquaintance. He wrote colloquial Latin with great readiness, and in turning nursery rhymes into that language, as well as in one or two more serious attempts, there are proofs of an ease of expression very creditable to the scholarship of a boy of fourteen. And if (as appears certain) Lamb, though not in the highest form at Christ's Hospital, had the benefit of the teaching of the head-master, the Rev. James Boyer, we have good reason for knowing that, pedant and tyrant though Boyer may have been, he was no bad trainer for such endowments as Coleridge's and Lamb's.

Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria*, has drawn a companion picture of the better side of Christ's Hospital discipline, which may judiciously be compared with Lamb's. "At school I enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a very sensible, though at the same time, a very severe master. He early moulded my taste to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero, of Homer and Theocritus to Virgil, and again of Virgil to Ovid. He habituated me to compare Lucretius (in such extracts as I then read), Terence, and above all, the chaster poems of Catullus, not only with the Roman poets of the so-called silver and brazen ages, but with even those of the Augustan era; and on grounds of plain sense and universal logic, to see and assert the superiority of the former, in the truth and nativeness both of their thoughts and diction. At the same time that we were studying the Greek tragic poets, he made us read Shakespeare and Milton as lessons; and they were the lessons, too, which required most time and trouble to *bring up*, so as to escape his censure. I learnt from him that poetry, even that of the loftiest, and seem-

ingly that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own as severe as that of science, and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more and more fugitive causes. In the truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word; and I well remember that, availing himself of the synonymes to the Homer of Didymus, he made us attempt to show, with regard to each, why it would not have answered the same purpose, and wherein consisted the peculiar fitness of the word in the original text." Such a teacher, according to Coleridge, was the guiding spirit of Christ's Hospital; and even allowing for Coleridge having in later life looked back with magnifying eyes upon those early lessons, and *read into* Boyer's teaching something that belonged rather to the learner than the teacher, we need not doubt how great were the young student's obligations to his master. Lamb, who was three years younger, and never reached the same position in the school, may not have benefited directly by this method of Boyer's, but he was the intimate companion of the elder schoolboy, and whatever Boyer taught we may be sure was handed on in some form or other to Lamb, tinged though it may have been by the wondrous individuality of his friend.

For the influence of Coleridge over Lamb, during these school-days and afterwards, is one of the most important elements a biographer of Lamb has to take account of. The boy, Samuel Taylor, had entered the school, as we have seen, in the same year. He was a lonely, dreamy lad, not living wholly apart from the pastimes of his companions, wandering with them into the country, and bathing in the New River, on the holidays of summer, but taking his pleasure on the whole sadly, loving above

all things knowledge, and greedily devouring whatever of that kind came in his way. Middleton, afterwards Bishop of Calcutta, at the time a Grecian in the school, found him one day reading Virgil in his play-hour, for his own amusement, and reported the circumstance to Boyer, who acted upon it by fostering henceforth in every way his pupil's talent. A stranger who met the boy one day in the London streets, lost in some day-dream, and moving his arms as one who "spreadeth forth his hands to swim," extracted from him the confession that he was only thinking of Leander and the Hellespont. The stranger, impressed with the boy's love of books, subscribed for him to a library in the neighbourhood of the school, and young Coleridge proceeded, as he has told us, to read "*through* the catalogue, folios and all, whether I understood them or did not understand them, running all risks in skulking out to get the two volumes which I was entitled to have daily." With a full consciousness, as is apparent, of his power, he seems at this age to have had no desire for distinction, but only for enlarged experience. At one time he wanted to be apprenticed to a shoemaker, whose wife had shown him some kindness. At a later time, encouraged by the example of his elder brother who had come up to walk the London Hospital, he conceived a passion for the medical profession and read every book on doctoring he could lay his hands on. He went through a phase of atheism—again, probably, out of sheer curiosity—until he was judiciously (so he said) flogged out of it by Boyer. And meantime he was reading metaphysics, and writing verses, in the true spirit of the future Coleridge. The lines he composed in his sixteenth year, suggested by his habit of living in the future till time present and future became in thought inextricably

intermingled, surely entitle him to the name of the "marvellous boy," as truly as anything Chatterton had written at the same age:—

> On the wide level of a mountain's head
> (I knew not where, but 'twas some fairy place)
> Their pinions, ostrich-like, for sails outspread,
> Two lovely children run an endless race,
> A sister and a brother!
> That far outstripp'd the other;
> Yet ever runs she with reverted face,
> And looks and listens for the boy behind;
> For he, alas! is blind!
> O'er rough and smooth with even step he pass'd,
> And knows not whether he be first or last

A striking feature of these lines is not so much that they are not the echo of any one school of poetry, but that in the special *metaphysic* of the thought, and the peculiar witchery of the verse, Coleridge here anticipated his maturest powers. It is on first thoughts strange that the boy who had read through whole libraries, "folios and all," and who could write verses such as these, should have been so deeply stirred as we know him to have been at the age of seventeen, when the small volume of fourteen sonnets of William Lisle Bowles fell into his hands. What was there, it might well be asked, in the poetry of Bowles, pathetic and graceful as it was, so to quicken the poetic impulse of Coleridge, that years afterwards he wrote of it to a friend as having "done his heart more good than all the other books he ever read, excepting his Bible." It is the fashion in the present day to speak slightingly of Bowles, but his sonnets have unquestionable merit. Their language is melodious to a degree which perhaps only Collins in that century had surpassed, and it expressed a tender melancholy, which may have been

inspired also by the study of the same poet. But Coleridge, the omnivorous reader, can hardly have been unacquainted with Gray and Collins, and the writer of such lines as—

> On the wide level of a mountain's head
> (I knew not where, but 'twas some fairy place),

could have had little to learn, as to the subtler music of versification, even from the greatest models. But it is significant that Coleridge couples these sonnets with the Bible, and he could hardly have done so without meaning it to be understood that Bowles' sonnets marked some change not purely artistic in his mind's growth. For the melancholy of Gray was constitutional, but the sadness of Bowles had its root in a close habit of introspection, and dwelling upon the moral side of things. The pensive beauty of such a sonnet as the well-known one on the *Influence of Time on Grief* wakes chords that are not often reached by the sentiment of the elder poets. There can be little doubt that at a critical point of Coleridge's life his moral nature was touched in ways for which he was profoundly grateful by these few poems of Bowles. He admits the obligation, indeed, in the first version of his sonnet to Bowles, when he confesses that "those soft strains" waked in him "love and sympathy" as well as fancy, and made him henceforth "not callous to a brother's pains." And we are justified in believing that his young companion, Charles Lamb, was passing with him along the same path of deepening thoughtfulness. He, too, had felt the charm of Bowles' tenderness. In his earliest letters to Coleridge no other name is mentioned oftener and with more admiration; and writing to his friend a few years later, from the "drudgery of the desk's dead wood" at the India House, Lamb complains

sorrowfully, "Not a soul loves Bowles here: scarce one has heard of Burns: few but laugh at me for reading my Testament."

It was in the year 1789, the year of the publication of Bowles' earliest sonnets, that Charles Lamb was removed from Christ's Hospital, and the companionship of the two friends was for a while interrupted. Lamb had found other congenial associates among the Blue Coats, and has embalmed their names in various ways in his essays; the two Le Grices from Cornwall, and James White, whose passion was for Shakespeare, and who afterwards compiled a collection of letters, as between Falstaff and his friends, in which he displayed some fancy, but chiefly a certain skill in taking to pieces the phraseology of the humorous characters in the historical plays and re-setting it in divers combinations. It was by these and other like accidents that the tastes and powers of the young Charles Lamb were being drawn forth in those seven years of school-life. The Latin and Greek of the Rev. Matthew Field, the under grammar-master, even the more advanced instruction under James Boyer, had a less important bearing on the future *Elia* than the picturesque surroundings of the Temple, alternating with those of the foundation of Edward VI., and above all, the daily companionship of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Leigh Hunt, in his autobiography, has described with great humour and spirit the Christ's Hospital of his day, only two or three years later. Hunt left school at the age of fifteen, when he had attained the same rank as Lamb—deputy Grecian—and, as he tells us, for the same reason. He, too, had an impediment in his speech. "I did not stammer half so badly as I used, but it was understood that a Grecian was bound to deliver a public speech before he

left school, and to go into the Church afterwards; and as I could do neither of these things, a Grecian I could not be." During his seven years in the school, Hunt often saw Charles Lamb, when he came to visit his old school-fellows, and recalled in after-life the "pensive, brown, handsome, and kindly face," and "the gait advancing with a motion from side to side, between involuntary unconsciousness and attempted ease." He dressed even then, Leigh Hunt adds, with that "Quaker-like plainness" that distinguished him all through life.

To leave school must have been to Charles Lamb a bitter sorrow. His aptitude for the special studies of the school was undeniable, and to part from Coleridge must have been a still heavier blow. His biographers have followed Leigh Hunt in pointing out that the school exhibitions to the universities were given on the implied condition of the winners of them proceeding to holy orders, and that in Lamb's case his infirmity of speech made that impossible. But there were probably other reasons, not less cogent. It must have been of importance to his family that Charles should, with as little delay as possible, begin to earn his bread. There was poverty in his home, and the prospect of means becoming yet more straitened. There were deepening anxieties of still graver cast, as we shall see hereafter. The youngest child of the family returned to share this poverty and these anxieties, and to learn thus early the meaning of that law of sacrifice to which he so cheerfully submitted for the remainder of his life.

CHAPTER II.

FAMILY STRUGGLES AND SORROWS.

(1789—1796.)

In two of Lamb's Essays of Elia, *My Relations*, and *Mackery End in Hertfordshire*, he has described various members of his own family, and among them his brother John and his sister Mary. These should be carefully read, in conjunction with the less studied utterances on the same theme in his letters, by those who would understand the conditions of that home of which he now became an inmate. Of the family of seven children born in the Temple to John and Elizabeth Lamb, only three survived, the two just mentioned, and Charles. The elder brother, John, at the time of his brother's leaving school a young man of twenty-six, held an appointment in the South Sea House. There was a Plumer in the office, mentioned by Lamb in his essay on that institution, and it was with the Plumer family in Hertfordshire that Lamb's grandmother had been housekeeper. It was probably to such an introduction that John Lamb owed his original clerkship in the office, and it is evident that at the time he first comes under our notice, his position in the office was fairly lucrative, and that the young man, unmarried, and of pleasant artistic tastes, was living by himself, enjoying life, and not

troubling himself too much about his poor relations in the Temple. The genial selfishness of his character is described with curious frankness by Charles, who yet seemed to entertain a kind of admiration for the well-dressed dilettante who cast in this way a kind of reflected light of respectability upon his humble relatives. He even addresses a sonnet to his brother, and applauds him for keeping "the elder brother up in state." There is a touch of sarcasm here, perhaps; and there is a sadder vein of irony in the description in *My Relations*:—

> It does me good as I walk towards the street of my daily avocation on some fine May morning, to meet him marching in a quite opposite direction, with a jolly handsome presence, and shining sanguine face that indicates some purchase in his eye—a Claude or a Hobbima—for much of his enviable leisure is consumed at Christie's and Phillips', or where not, to pick up pictures and such gauds. On these occasions he mostly stoppeth me, to read a short lecture on the advantage a person like me possesses above himself, in having his time occupied with business which he *must do*; assureth me that he often feels it hang heavy on his hands; wishes he had fewer holidays; and goes off Westward Ho! chanting a tune to Pall Mall; perfectly convinced that he has convinced me, while I proceed in my opposite direction tuneless.

We feel that this picture needs no additional touches. "Marching in a quite opposite direction" was what John Lamb continued to do, in all respects, as concerned the dutiful and home-keeping members of his family. It was not to him that father and mother, sister or brother, were to look for help in their great need. Wholly different was the other elder child, next to him in age, Mary Lamb, the *Bridget Elia* of the Essays. Ten years older than Charles, she filled a position to him in these boyish days

rather of mother than of sister. It is clear that these two children from the earliest age depended much on one another for sympathy and support. The mother never understood or appreciated the daughter's worth, and the father, who seems to have married late in life, was already failing in health and powers when Charles left school. The brother and sister were therefore thrown upon one another for companionship and intellectual sympathy, when school friendships were for a while suspended. Mary Lamb shared from childhood her brother's taste for reading. "She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage." The spacious closet was, it would seem, the library of Samuel Salt, to which both she and Charles early had access. It was a blessed resource for them in face of the monotony and other discomforts of their home and against more serious evils. There was, as we have seen, a taint of mania in the family, inherited from the father's side. It appeared in different shapes in all three children, if we are to trust a casual remark in one of Charles' letters touching his brother John. But in Mary Lamb there is reason to suppose that it had been a cause of anxiety to her parents from an early period of her life. In one of his earliest poems addressed to Charles Lamb, Coleridge speaks of him creeping round a "dear-loved sister's bed, with noiseless step," soothing each pang with fond solicitude. These claims upon his brotherly watchfulness fell to the lot of Charles while still a boy, and they were never relaxed during life. There was a pathetic truth in the prediction of Coleridge which followed:—

Cheerily, dear Charles!
Thou thy best friend shalt cherish many a year.

He continued to devote himself to this, his best friend, for more than forty years, and henceforth the lives of the brother and sister are such that the story of the one can hardly be told apart from the other.

It has been said that Lamb's first years were passed between the Temple and Christ's Hospital — between "cloister and cloister"—but there were happy holiday seasons when he had glimpses of a very different life. These were spent with his grandmother, Mary Field, at the old mansion of the Plumer family, Blakesware, closely adjoining the pleasant village of Widford, in Hertfordshire. The Plumers had two residences in the county, one at Gilston, and the other just mentioned, a few miles distant. The latter was the house where the dowager Mrs. Plumer and younger children of the family resided. Sometimes there would be no members of the family to inhabit it, and at such times old Mrs. Field, who held the post of housekeeper for the last fifty or sixty years of her life, reigned supreme over the old place. Her three grandchildren were then often with her, and the old-fashioned mansion, with its decaying tapestries and carved chimneys, together with the tranquil, rural beauty of the gardens and the surrounding country, made an impression on the childish imagination of Lamb, which is not to be overlooked in considering the influences which moulded his thought and style. There were many ties of family affection binding him to Hertfordshire. His grandmother was a native of the county, and in the beautiful essay called *Mackery End* he has described a visit paid in later life to other relations, in the neighbourhood of Wheathampstead. It is noticeable how Lamb, the

"scorner of the fields," as Wordsworth termed him, yet showed the true poet's appreciation of English rural scenery, whenever at least his heart was touched by any association of it with human joy or sorrow.

In 1792 Mrs. Field died at a good old age, and lies buried in the quiet churchyard of Widford. Lamb has preserved her memory in the tender tribute to her virtues, *The Grandame*, which appeared among his earliest published verses,—

> On the green hill top
> Hard by the house of prayer, a modest roof
> And not distinguished from its neighbour-barn
> Save by a slender tapering length of spire,
> The Grandame sleeps. A plain stone barely tells
> The name and date to the chance passenger.

Time and weather have effaced even name and date, but the stone is still pointed out in Widford churchyard. The old lady had suffered long from an incurable disease, and the young Charles Lamb had clearly found some of his earliest religious impressions deepened by watching her courage and resignation :—

> For she had studied patience in the school
> Of Christ ; much comfort she had thence derived
> And was a *follower* of the Nazarene.

With her death the tie with Blakesware was not broken. The family of the Lambs had pleasant relations with other of the Widford people. Their constant friend, Mr. Randal Norris, the Sub-treasurer of the Inner Temple, had connexions with the place, and long after the death of Mrs. Field we find Lamb and his sister spending occasional holidays in the neighbourhood.

At some date, unfixed, in the two years following his

removal from Christ's Hospital, Charles obtained a post of some kind in the South Sea House, where his brother John held an appointment. No account of this period of his life remains to us, except such as can be drawn from the essay on the *South Sea House*, written thirty years later in the *London Magazine* as the first of the papers signed *Elia*. The essay contains little or nothing about himself, and we are ignorant as to the duties and emoluments of his situation. It was not long, however, before he got promotion, in the form of a clerkship in the accountant's office of the East India Company, obtained for him through the influence of Samuel Salt. His salary began at the rate of 70*l*. a year, rising by gradual steps, and in the service of the East India Company Charles Lamb continued for the rest of his working life.

Of these first years of official life, from the date of his entry into the office in April, 1792, till the spring of 1796, there is little to be learned, save from a few scattered allusions in the letters which from this later date have been preserved. Up to the year 1795 the family of Lamb continued to live in the Temple, when the increasing infirmity of John Lamb the elder made him leave the service of his old employer, and retire on a small pension to lodgings in Little Queen Street, Holborn. No fragment of writing of Charles Lamb of earlier date than 1795 has been preserved. His work as a junior clerk absorbed the greater part of his day and of his year. In his first years of service his annual holiday was a single week, and this scanty breathing-space he generally spent in his favourite Hertfordshire. Then there were the occasional visits to the theatre, and it was the theatre which all through life shared with books the keenest love of Lamb and his sister. He has left us an account, in the essay,

My First Play, of his earliest experiences of this kind, beginning with *Artaxerxes*, and proceeding to *The Lady of the Manor* and the *Way of the World*, all seen by him when he was between six and seven years old. Seven years elapsed before he saw another play (for play-going was not permitted to Christ's Hospital boys), and he admits that when after that interval he visited the theatre again, much of its former charm had vanished. The old classical tragedy and the old-world sentimental comedy alike failed to satisfy him, and it was not till he first saw Mrs. Siddons that the acted drama reasserted its power. "The theatre became to him, once more," he tells us, "the most delightful of recreations." One of the earliest of his sonnets records the impression made upon him by this great actress. And as soon as we are admitted through his correspondence with Coleridge and others to know his tastes and habits, we find how important a part the drama and all its associations were playing in the direction of his genius.

Nor was the gloom of his home life unrelieved by occasional renewals of the intellectual companionship he had enjoyed at school. Coleridge had gone up to Jesus College, Cambridge, early in 1791, and except during the six months of his soldier's life in the Light Dragoons, remained there for the next four years. During this time he made occasional visits to London, when it was the great pleasure of the two school-fellows to meet at a tavern near Smithfield, the "Salutation and Cat" (probably a well-known rallying-point in the old Christ's days), and there to spend long evenings in discussion on literature and the other topics dear to both. Coleridge was now writing poems, and finding a temporary home for them in the columns of the *Morning Chronicle*. Among them

appeared the sonnet on Mrs. Siddons, which was thus probably Lamb's first appearance in print. Both the young men were clearly dreaming of authorship, and Lamb's first avowed appearance as author was in the first volume of poems by Coleridge, published by Cottle, of Bristol, in the spring of the year 1796. "The effusions signed C. L.," says Coleridge in the preface to this volume, "were written by Mr. Charles Lamb of the India House. Independently of the signature, their superior merit would have sufficiently distinguished them." The effusions consisted of four sonnets, the one already noticed on Mrs. Siddons, one "written at midnight by the sea-side after a voyage," and two, in every way the most noteworthy, dealing with the one love-romance of Charles Lamb's life. The sonnets have no special literary value, but the first of these has importance enough in its bearing on Lamb's character to justify quotation :—

> Was it some sweet device of Faëry
> That mocked my steps with many a lonely glade,
> And fancied wanderings with a fair-haired maid ?
> Have these things been ? Or what rare witchery,
> Impregning with delights the charmed air,
> Enlightened up the semblance of a smile
> In those fine eyes ? methought they spake the while
> Soft soothing things, which might enforce despair
> To drop the murdering knife, and let go by
> His foul resolve. And does the lonely glade
> Still court the footsteps of the fair-haired maid ?
> Still in her locks the gales of summer sigh ?
> While I forlorn do wander, reckless where,
> And 'mid my wanderings meet no Anna there.

If the allusions in this and the following sonnet stood alone, we might well be asking, as in the case of Shakespeare's sonnets, whether the situation was not dramatic

rather than autobiographical; but we have good reasons for inferring that the Anna, "the fair-haired maid" of these poems, had a real existence. His first love is referred to constantly in later letters and essays as Alice W——n, and it is easy to perceive that the Anna of the sonnets and this Alice W——n were the same person. In both cases the fair hair and the mild, pale blue eyes are the salient features. But the sonnets that tell of these, tell also of the "winding wood-walks green," and

> the little cottage which she loved,
> The cottage which did once my all contain.

From these alone we might infer that Lamb had first met the subject of them, not in London, but during his frequent visits to Blakesware. Lamb himself, often so curiously out-spoken on the subject of his personal history, has nowhere directly told us where he met his Alice, but he cannot seriously have meant to keep the secret. In the essay, *Blakesmoor in H——shire*, he recalls the picture-gallery with the old family portraits, and among them "that beauty with the cool, blue, pastoral drapery, and a lamb, that hung next the great bay window, with the bright yellow Hertfordshire hair, *so like my Alice!*" His "fair-haired maid" was clearly from Hertfordshire. It will be seen hereafter what light is further thrown on the matter by Lamb himself. All that we know as certain, is that Lamb, while yet a boy, lost his heart, and that whether the course of true love ran smooth or not, he willingly submitted to forego the hoped for tie, when a claim upon his devotion appeared in the closer circle of his home.

Unless, indeed, a more personal and even more terrible occasion of this sacrifice had arisen at an earlier date. We

know, on his own admission, that in the winter of 1795-96, Charles Lamb himself succumbed to the family malady, and passed some weeks in confinement. In the earliest of his letters that has been preserved, belonging to the early part of 1796, he tells his friend Coleridge the sad truth :—

My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that finished last year and began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a madhouse at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite any one. But mad I was! . . . . Coleridge, it may convince you of my regard for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary frenzy.

The "other person" can have been no other than the fair-haired Alice, and if disappointed love was the immediate cause of his derangement, the discovery in him of this tendency may have served to break off all relations between the lovers still more effectually. Wonderfully touching are the lines which, as he tells Coleridge in the same letter, were written by him in his prison-house in one of his lucid intervals :—

To my Sister.

If from my lips some angry accents fell,
Peevish complaint, or harsh reproof unkind,
'Twas but the error of a sickly mind
And troubled thoughts, clouding the purer well,
And waters clear, of Reason : and for me
Let this my verse the poor atonement be—
My verse, which thou to praise wert e'er inclined
Too highly, and with a partial eye to see
No blemish. Thou to me didst ever show
Kindest affection ; and would'st oft-times lend

An ear to the despairing, love-sick lay,
Weeping my sorrows with me, who repay
But ill the mighty debt of love I owe,
Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend.

The history of many past weeks or months seems written in these lines; the history of a hopeless attachment, a reason yielding to long distress of mind, and a sister's love already repaying by anticipation the "mighty debt" which in after days it was itself to owe.

This year 1795-96, was indeed a memorable one in the annals of the brother and sister. The fortunes of the Lamb family were at low ebb. They had removed to lodgings in Little Queen Street, the mother a confirmed invalid, and the father sinking gradually into second childhood. Charles had been temporarily under restraint, and Mary Lamb, in addition to the increasing labour of ministering to her parents, was working for their common maintenance by taking in needlework. It is not strange that under this pressure her own reason, so often threatened, at last gave way. It was in September of 1796 that the awful calamity of her life befell. A young apprentice girl, who was at work in the common sitting-room while dinner was preparing, appears to have excited the latent mania. Mary Lamb seized a knife from the table, pursued the girl round the room, and finally stabbed to the heart her mother who had interfered in the girl's behalf. It was Charles Lamb himself who seized the unhappy sister, and wrested the knife from her hand, but not before she had hurled in her rage other knives about the room, and wounded, though not fatally, the now almost imbecile father. *The Times* of a few days later relates that an inquest was held on the following day, and a verdict of insanity returned in

the case of the unhappy daughter. Lamb's account of the event is given in a letter to Coleridge, of Sept. 27th.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—White, or some of my friends, or the public papers by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines:—My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses—I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgment, I believe, very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr. Norris, of the Bluecoat School, has been very kind to us, and we have no other friend; but, thank God, I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me the "former things are passed away," and I have something more to do than to feel.

God Almighty have us well in His keeping.

C. LAMB.

Mention nothing of poetry. I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind. Do as you please; but if you publish, publish mine (I give free leave) without name or initial, and never send me a book, I charge you.

A second letter followed in less than a week, in a tone somewhat less forlorn.

Your letter was an inestimable treasure to me. It will be a comfort to you, I know, to know that our prospects are somewhat brighter. My poor dear, dearest sister, the unhappy and unconscious instrument of the Almighty's judgments on our house, is restored to her senses; to a dreadful sense and recollection of what has past, awful to her mind and impressive (as it must be to the end of life), but tempered with religious resignation and

the reasonings of a sound judgment, which, in this early stage, knows how to distinguish between a deed committed in a transient fit of frenzy, and the terrible guilt of a mother's murder. I have seen her. I found her, this morning calm and serene; far, very far, from an indecent, forgetful serenity; she has a most affectionate and tender concern for what has happened. Indeed, from the beginning, frightful and hopeless as her disorder seemed, I had confidence enough in her strength of mind and religious principle, to look forward to a time when *even she* might recover tranquillity. God be praised, Coleridge, wonderful as it is to tell, I have never once been otherwise than collected and calm; even on the dreadful day, and in the midst of the terrible scene, I preserved a tranquillity which bystanders may have construed into indifference—a tranquillity not of despair. Is it folly or sin in me to say that it was a religious principle that *most* supported me? I allow much to other favourable circumstances. I felt that I had something else to do than to regret. On that first evening, my aunt was lying insensible, to all appearance like one dying,—my father, with his poor forehead plastered over, from a wound he had received from a daughter dearly loved by him, who loved him no less dearly,—my mother a dead and murdered corpse in the next room,—yet was I wonderfully supported. I closed not my eyes in sleep that night, but lay without terrors and without despair. I have lost no sleep since. I had been long used not to rest in things of sense; had endeavoured after a comprehension of mind, unsatisfied with the "ignorant present time," and this kept me up. I had the whole weight of the family thrown on me; for my brother, little disposed (I speak not without tenderness for him) at any time to take care of old age and infirmities, had now, with his bad leg, an exemption from such duties, and I was now left alone. . . . .

Our friends here have been very good. Sam Le Grice, who was then in town, was with me the three or four first days, and was as a brother to me; gave up every hour of his time, to the very hurting of his health and spirits, in constant attendance and humouring my poor father; talked with him, read to him,

played at cribbage with him (for so short is the old man's recollection that he was playing at cards, as though nothing had happened, while the coroner's inquest was sitting over the way). Samuel wept tenderly when he went away, for his mother wrote him a very severe letter on his loitering so long in town, and he was forced to go. Mr. Norris, of Christ's Hospital, has been as a father to me; Mrs. Norris as a mother, though we had few claims on them. A gentleman, brother to my godmother, from whom we never had right or reason to expect any such assistance, sent my father 20*l.*; and to crown all these God's blessings to our family at such a time, an old lady, a cousin of my father's and aunt's, a gentlewoman of fortune, is to take my aunt and make her comfortable for the short remainder of her days. My aunt is recovered, and as well as ever, and highly pleased at thoughts of going; and has generously given up the interest of her little money (which was formerly paid my father for her board) wholly and solely to my sister's use. Reckoning this, we have, Daddy and I, for our two selves and an old maid-servant to look after him when I am out, which will be necessary, 170*l.*, or 180*l.* rather, a year, out of which we can spare 50*l.* or 60*l.* at least for Mary while she stays at Islington, where she must and shall stay during her father's life, for his and her comfort. I know John will make speeches about it, but she shall not go into an hospital. The good lady of the madhouse, and her daughter—an elegant, sweet-behaved young lady—love her and are taken with her amazingly; and I know from her own mouth she loves them, and longs to be with them as much. Poor thing! they say she was but the other morning saying she knew she must go to Bethlehem for life; that one of her brothers would have it so, but the other would wish it not, but be obliged to go with the stream; that she had often as she passed Bethlehem thought it likely, "here it may be my fate to end my days," conscious of a certain flightiness in her poor head oftentimes, and mindful of more than one severe illness of that nature before. A legacy of 100*l.*, which my father will have at Christmas, and this 20*l.* I mentioned before, with what

is in the house, will much more than set us clear. If my father, an old servant-maid, and I, can't live, and live comfortably, on 130*l.* or 120*l.* a year, we ought to burn by slow fires; and I almost would, that Mary might not go into an hospital. Let me not leave one unfavourable impression on your mind respecting my brother. Since this has happened he has been very kind and brotherly, but I fear for his mind. He has taken his ease in the world, and is not fit himself to struggle with difficulties, nor has much accustomed himself to throw himself into their way; and I know his language is already, "Charles, you must take care of yourself, you must not abridge yourself of a single pleasure you have been used to," &c., &c., and in that style of talking. But you, a necessarian, can respect a difference of mind, and love what is amiable in a character not perfect. He has been very good, but I fear for his mind. Thank God, I can unconnect myself with him, and shall manage all my father's monies in future myself if I take charge of Daddy, which poor John has not even hinted a wish, at any future time even, to share with me. The lady at this madhouse assures me that I may dismiss immediately both doctor and apothecary, retaining occasionally a composing draught or so for a while; and there is a less expensive establishment in her house, where she will not only have a room and nurse to herself for 50*l.* or guineas a year—the outside would be 60*l.*—you know by economy how much more even I shall be able to spare for her comforts. She will, I fancy, if she stays make one of the family, rather than of the patients; the old and young ladies I like exceedingly, and she loves dearly; and they, as the saying is, take to her extraordinarily, if it is extraordinary that people who see my sister should love her. Of all the people I ever saw in the world, my poor sister was most and thoroughly devoid of the quality of selfishness. I will enlarge upon her qualities, dearest soul, in a future letter for my own comfort, for I understand her thoroughly; and if I mistake not, in the most trying situation that a human being can be found in, she will be found (I speak not with sufficient humility, I fear, but humanly and foolishly

speaking) she will be found, I trust, uniformly great and amiable. God keep her in her present mind, to whom be thanks and praise for all His dispensations to mankind.

It is necessary for the full understanding of what Charles Lamb was, and of the life that lay before him, that this deeply interesting account should be given in his own words. Anything that a biographer might add would only weaken the picture of courage, dutifulness and affection here presented. The only fitting sequel to it is the history of the remaining five-and-thirty years in which he fulfilled so nobly and consistently his self-imposed task.

That task was made lighter to him than in the natural dejection of the first sad moments he could have dared to hope. The poor old father survived the mother but a few months, and passed quietly out of life early in the following year. The old aunt, who did not long find a home with the capricious relative who had undertaken the charge of her, returned to Charles and his father, only, however, to survive her brother a few weeks. Charles was now free to consult his own wishes as to the future care of his sister. She was still in the asylum at Hoxton, and it was his earnest desire that she might return to live with him. By certain conditions and arrangements between him and the proper authorities, her release from confinement was ultimately brought about, and the brother's guardianship was accepted as sufficient for the future. She returned to share his solitude for the remainder of his life. The mania which had once attacked Charles, never in his case returned. Either the shock of calamity, or the controlling power of the vow he had laid on himself, overmastered the inherited tendency. But in the case of Mary Lamb it returned at frequent intervals through life, never again

happily with any disastrous result. The attacks seem to have been generally attended with forewarnings, which enabled the brother and sister to take the necessary measures, and a friend of the Lambs has related how on one occasion he met the brother and sister, at such a season, walking hand in hand across the fields to the old asylum, both bathed in tears.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST EXPERIMENTS IN LITERATURE.

(1796—1800.)

EARLY in 1797 Charles Lamb and his sister began their life of "dual loneliness." But during these first years the brother's loneliness was often unshared. Much of Mary Lamb's life was passed in visits to the asylum, and the mention of her successive attacks is of melancholy recurrence in Charles' letters. Happily for the brother's sanity of mind, he was beginning to find friends and sympathies in new directions. What books had been to him all his life, and what education he had been finding in them, is evident from his earliest extant letters. His published correspondence begins in 1796, with a letter to Coleridge, then at Bristol, and from this and other letters of the same year we see the first signs of that variety of literary taste so noteworthy in a young man of twenty-one. The letters of this year are mainly on critical subjects. He encloses his own sonnets, and points out the passages in elder writers, Parnell or Cowley, to which he has been indebted. Or he acknowledges poems of Coleridge, sent for his criticism, and proceeds to express his opinion on them with frankness. He had been introduced to Southey, by Coleridge, some time in 1795, and he writes to the latter, "With *Joan of Arc* I have been delighted, amazed;

I had not presumed to expect anything of such excellence from Southey. Why, the poem is alone sufficient to redeem the character of the age we live in from the imputation of degenerating in poetry, were there no such beings extant as Burns, Bowles, and Cowper, and — ; fill up the blank how you please." It is noticeable also how prompt the young man was to discover the real significance of the poetic revival of the latter years of the eighteenth century. Burns he elsewhere mentions at this time to Coleridge in stronger terms of enthusiam as having been the "God of my idolatry, as Bowles was of yours," nor was he less capable of appreciating the "divine chit-chat" of Cowper. The real greatness of Wordsworth he was one of the earliest to discover and to proclaim. And at the same time his imagination was being stirred by the romantic impulse that was coming from Germany. "Have you read," he asks Coleridge, "the ballad called 'Leonora' in the second number of the *Monthly Magazine*? If you have!!! There is another fine song, from the same author (Bürger) in the third number, of scarce inferior merit." But still more remarkable in the intellectual history of so young a man is the acquaintance he shows with the earlier English authors, at a time when the revival of Shakespearian study was comparatively recent, and when the other Elizabethan dramatists were all but unknown save to the archæologist. We must suppose that the library of Samuel Salt was more than usually rich in old folios, for certainly Lamb had not only 'browsed' (to use his own expression), but had read and criticized deeply, as well as discursively. In a letter to Coleridge of this same year, 1796, he quotes with enthusiasm the rather artificial lines of Massinger in *A very Woman*, pointing out the "fine effect of the double endings."

Not far from where my father lives, a lady,
A neighbour by, blest with as great a beauty
As nature durst bestow without undoing,
Dwelt, and most happily, as I thought then,
And blest the house a thousand times she dwelt in.
This beauty, in the blossom of my youth,
When my first fire knew no adulterate incense,
Nor I no way to flatter but my fondness,
In all the bravery my friends could show me,
In all the faith my innocence could give me,
In the best language my true tongue could tell me,
And all the broken sighs my sick heart lend me,
I sued and served; long did I serve this lady,
Long was my travail, long my trade to win her;
With all the duty of my soul I served her.[1]

Beaumont and Fletcher he quotes with no less delight, "in which authors I can't help thinking there is a greater richness of poetical fancy than in any one, Shakespeare excepted." Again, he asks the same inseparable friend, "Among all your quaint readings did you ever light upon *Walton's Complete Angler?* I asked you the question once before; it breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity, and simplicity of heart; there are many choice old verses interspersed in it: it would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it: it would Christianize every discordant angry passion." And while thus discursive in his older reading, he was hardly less so in the literature of his own century. He had been fascinated by the *Confessions* of Rousseau, and was for a time at least under the influence of the sentimental school of novelists, the followers of Richardson and Sterne in England. So varied was the field of authors and subjects on which his style was being formed and his fancy nourished.

[1] These lines are interesting as having been chosen by Lamb for a "motto" to his first published poems. As so used, they clearly bore a reference to his own patient wooing at that time.

Long afterwards, in his essay on *Books and Reading*, he boasted that he could read anything which he called *a book*. "I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low." But this versatility of sympathy, which was at the root of so large a part of both matter and manner when he at length discovered where his real strength lay, had the effect of delaying that discovery for some time. His first essays in literature were mainly imitative, and though there is not one of them that is without his peculiar charm, or that a lover of Charles Lamb would willingly let die, they are more interesting from the fact of their authorship, and from the light they throw on the growth of Lamb's mind, than for their intrinsic value.

Meantime, his life in the lonely Queen Street lodging was cheered by the acquisition of some new friends, chiefly introduced by Coleridge. He had known Southey since 1795, and some time in the following year, or early in 1797, he had formed a closer bond of sympathy with Charles Lloyd, son of a banker of Birmingham, a young man of poetic taste and melancholy temperament, who had taken up his abode, for the sake of intellectual companionship, with Coleridge at Bristol. One of the first results of this companionship was a second literary venture in which the new friend took a share. A second edition of *Poems by S. T. Coleridge, to which are now added Poems by Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd*, appeared at Bristol, in the summer of 1797, published by Coleridge's devoted admirer, Joseph Cottle.

"There were inserted in my former edition," writes Coleridge in the preface, "a few sonnets of my friend and old school-fellow, Charles Lamb. He has now communicated to me a complete collection of all his poems; quæ

qui non prorsus amet, illum omnes et virtutes et veneres odere." The phrase is a trifle grandiloquent to describe the short list—some fifteen in all—of sonnets and occasional verses here printed. Nor is there anything in their style to indicate the influence of new models. A tender grace of the type of his old favourite, Bowles, is still their chief merit, and they are interesting as showing how deeply the events of the past few years had stirred the religious side of Charles Lamb's nature. A review of the day characterized the manner of Lamb and Lloyd as "plaintive," and the epithet is not ill-chosen. Lamb was still living chiefly in the past, and the thought of his sister, and recollection of the pious "Grandame" in Hertfordshire, with kindred memories of his own childhood and disappointed affections, make the subject-matter of almost all the verse. A little allegorical poem, with the title of "A Vision of Repentance," relegated to an appendix in this same volume, marks the most sacred confidence that Lamb ever gave to the world as to his meditations on the mystery of evil.

It is unlikely that this little venture brought any profit to its authors, or that a subsequent volume of blank verse by Lamb and Lloyd in the following year was more remunerative. To Lloyd the question was doubtless of less importance; but Lamb was anxious for his sister's sake to add to his scanty income, and with this view he resolved to make an experiment in prose fiction. In the year 1798 he composed his little story, bearing the title, as originally issued, of *A Tale of Rosamund Gray and Old Blind Margaret.*

This "miniature romance," as Talfourd calls it, is perhaps better known after the essays of Elia, than any of Lamb's writings, and the secret of its charm, in the face

of improbabilities and unrealities of many kinds, is one of the curiosities of literature. The story itself is built up of the most heterogeneous materials. The idea of the story, the ruin of a village maiden, Rosamund Gray, by a melodramatic villain with the "uncommon" name of Matravis, was suggested to Lamb, as he admits in a letter to Southey, by a "foolish" (and it must be added, a very scurrilous) old ballad about "an old woman clothed in grey." The name of his heroine he borrowed from some verses of his friend Lloyd's (not included in their joint volume), and that of the villain from one of the ruffians employed to murder the king in Marlowe's *Edward the Second*,—that death-scene which he afterwards told the world "moved pity and terror beyond any scene ancient or modern" with which he was acquainted. The conduct of the little story bears strong traces of the influence of Richardson and Mackenzie, and a rather forced reference to the latter's *Julia de Roubigné* seems to show where he had lately been reading. A portion of the narrative is conducted by correspondence between the two well-bred young ladies of the story, and when one of them begins a letter to her cousin, "Health, innocence, and beauty shall be thy bridesmaids, my sweet cousin," we are at once aware in what school of polite letter-writing the author had studied. After the heroine, the two principal characters are a brother and sister, Allan and Elinor Clare, the relation between whom (the sister is represented as just ten years older than her brother) is borrowed almost without disguise from that of Lamb and his sister Mary. "Elinor Clare was the best good creature, the least selfish human being I ever knew, always at work for other people's good, planning other people's happiness, continually forgetful to consult for her own personal gratifica-

tions, except indirectly in the welfare of another; while her parents lived, the most attentive of daughters; since they died, the kindest of sisters. I never knew but *one* like her." There is besides a schoolfellow of Allan's, who precedes him to college, evidently a recollection of the school-friendship with Coleridge. But still more significant as showing the personal element in the little romance, is the circumstance that Lamb lays the scene of it in that Hertfordshire village of Widford where so many of his own happiest hours had been spent, and that the heroine, Rosamund Gray, is drawn with those features on which he was never weary of dwelling in the object of his own boyish passion. Rosamund, with the pale blue eyes and the "yellow Hertfordshire hair" is but a fresh copy of his Anna and his Alice. That Rosamund Gray had an actual counterpart in real life seems certain, and the little group of cottages, in one of which she dwelt with her old grandmother, is still shown in the village of Widford, about half a mile from the site of the old mansion of Blakesware. And it is the tradition of the village, and believed by those who have the best means of judging, that "Rosamund Gray" (her real name was equally remote from this, and from Alice W——n) was Charles Lamb's first and only love. Her fair hair and eyes, her goodness, and (we may assume) her poverty, were drawn from life. The rest of the story in which she bears a part is of course pure fiction. The real Anna of the sonnets made a prosperous marriage, and lived to a good old age.

As if Lamb were resolved to give his little tale the character of personal "confessions," he has contrived to introduce into it, by quotation or allusion, all his favourite writers, from Walton and Wither to Mackenzie and Burns.

But of more interest from this point of view than any resemblances of detail, is the shadow, as of recent calamity, that rests upon the story, and the strain of religious emotion that pervades it. It is this that gives the romance, conventional as it is for the most part in its treatment of life and manners, its real attractiveness. It is redolent of Lamb's native sweetness of heart, delicacy of feeling, and undefinable charm of style. And these qualities did not altogether fail to attract attention. The little venture was a moderate success, and brought its author some "few guineas." One tribute to its merits was paid many years later, which, we may hope, did not fail to reach the author. Shelley, writing to Leigh Hunt from Leghorn, in 1819, and acknowledging the receipt of a parcel of books, adds, "With it came, too, Lamb's works. What a lovely thing is his *Rosamund Gray!* How much knowledge of the sweetest and deepest part of our nature in it! When I think of such a mind as Lamb's, when I see how unnoticed remain things of such exquisite and complete perfection, what should I hope for myself, if I had not higher objects in view than fame?"

There is scanty material for the biographer of Lamb and his sister during these first four years of struggling poverty. The few events that varied their monotonous life are to be gathered from the letters to Coleridge and Southey, written during this period. The former was married, and living at Nether Stowey, near Bristol, where Charles and Mary Lamb paid him apparently their first visit, during one of Charles' short holidays in the summer of 1797. This visit was made memorable by a slight accident that befell Coleridge on the day of their arrival, and forced him to remain at home while his visitors explored the surrounding country. Left alone in his garden, he composed the

curiously Wordsworthian lines, bearing for title (he was perhaps reminded of Ferdinand in the *Tempest*), "This lime-tree bower my prison," in which he apostrophizes Lamb as the "gentle-hearted Charles," and addresses him as one who had—

> Hungered after nature, many a year
> In the great city pent, winning thy way
> With sad and patient zeal, through evil and pain
> And strange calamity.

Charles did not quite relish the epithet "gentle-hearted," and showed that he winced under a title that savoured a little of pity or condescension. Indeed, it is evident, in spite of the real affection that Lamb never ceased to feel for Coleridge, that the relations between the friends were often strained during these earlier days. This year, 1797, was that of the joint volume, and the mutual criticism indulged so freely by both was leaving a little soreness behind. Then there was the question of precedence between Lamb and Lloyd in this same volume, which was settled in Lloyd's favour, not without a few pangs, confessed by Lamb himself. And when, in the following year, Coleridge was on the eve of his visit to Germany with the Wordsworths, a foolish message of his, "If Lamb requires any knowledge, let him apply to me," had been repeated to Lamb by some injudicious friend, and did not tend to improve matters. Lamb retaliated by sending Coleridge a grimly humorous list of "Theses quædam Theologicæ," to be by him "defended or oppugned (or both) at Leipsic or Göttingen." Numbers five and six in this list may be given as a sample. "Whether the higher order of Seraphim illuminati ever sneer?" "Whether pure intelligences can love, or whether they can love anything besides pure intellect?" The rest are in the same

vein, and if they have any point at all, it must lie in an allusion to certain airs of lofty superiority in which Coleridge had indulged to the annoyance of his friend. There was a temporary soreness in the heart of Charles on parting with his old companion. There had been a grievance of the same kind before. It had been bitterly repented of, even in a flood of tears. To the beginning of this year, 1798, belong the touching verses composed in the same spirit of self-confession that has marked so much of his writing up to this period, about the "old familiar faces." In their earliest shape they are more directly autobiographical. Lamb afterwards omitted the first stanza, and gave the lines a less personal character. The precise occasion of their being written seems uncertain, but the reference to the friend whom he had so nearly thrown away, in a moment of pique, is unmistakable.

Where are they gone, the old familiar faces?
I had a mother, but she died, and left me—
Died prematurely in a day of horrors—
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have had playmates, I have had companions
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days,
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies—
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a love once, fairest among women.
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her—
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I had a friend, a kinder friend has no man.
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly!
Left him to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood.
Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother;
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling,
So might we talk of the old familiar faces.

For some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me, all are departed;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

The "friend of my bosom" was the new associate, Lloyd, who seems for a time at least to have taken Coleridge's place as Lamb's special confidant. He, too, had had his grievances against the "greater Ajax," and the two humbler combatants, who had "come into battle under his shield," found consolation at this time in one another. Lloyd was moody and sensitive—even then a prey to the melancholy which clung to him through life, and it was well for Lamb that on Coleridge leaving England he had some more genial companionship to take refuge in. It was three years since he had made the acquaintance of Southey. In the summer of 1797 he and Lloyd had passed a fortnight under his roof in Hampshire. And now that Coleridge was far away, it was Southey who naturally took his place as literary adviser and confidant.

We gather from Lamb's letters to Southey, in 1798-99, that this change of association for the time was good for him. Coleridge and Lloyd were of temperaments too nearly akin to Lamb's to be wholly serviceable in these days, when the calamities in his family still overshadowed him. The friendship of Southey, the healthy-natured, the industrious, and the methodical, was a wholesome change of atmosphere. Southey was now living at West-

bury, near Bristol. Though only a few months Lamb's senior, he had been three years a married man, and was valiantly working to support his young wife by that craft of literature which he followed so patiently to his life's end. In this year, 1798, he was in his sweetest and most humorous ballad vein. It was the year of the *Well of St. Keyne* and the *Battle of Blenheim*, and other of those shorter pieces by which Southey will always be most widely known. He had not failed to discover Lamb's value as a critic, and each eclogue or ballad, as it is written, is submitted to his judgment. The result of this change of interest is shown in a marked difference of tone and style in Lamb's letters. He is less sad and meditative, and begins to exhibit that peculiar playfulness which we associate with the future Elia. One day he writes,—"My tailor has brought me home a new coat, lapelled, with a velvet collar. He assures me everybody wears velvet collars now. Some are born fashionable, some achieve fashion, and others, like your humble servant, have fashion thrust upon them." And his remarks on Southey's ode *To a Spider* (in which he justly notes the metre as its chief merit, and wonders that "Burns had not hit upon it") are followed by a discursive pleasantry having the true Elia ring, "I love this sort of poems that open a new intercourse with the most despised of the animal and insect race. I think this vein may be further opened. Peter Pindar hath very prettily apostrophized a fly; Burns hath his mouse and his louse; Coleridge, less successfully, hath made overtures of intimacy to a jackass, therein only following, at unresembling distance, Sterne and greater Cervantes. Besides these, I know of no other examples of breaking down the partition between us and our 'poor earth-born companions.'" And the suggestion

that follows, that Southey should undertake a series of poems, with the object of awakening sympathy for animals too generally ill-treated or held in disgust, is most characteristic, both in matter and manner. Indeed it is in these earlier letters to Southey, rather than in his poetry or in *Rosamund Gray*, that Charles Lamb was feeling the way to his true place in literature. Already we observe a vein of reflectiveness and a curious felicity of style which owe nothing to any predecessor. And if his humour, even in his lightest moods, has a tinge of sadness, it is not to be accounted for only by the suffering he had passed through. It belonged in fact to the profound humanity of its author, to the circumstance that with him, as with all true humorists, humour was but one side of an acute and almost painful sympathy.

At the close of the year 1799 Coleridge returned from Germany, and the intercourse between the two friends was at once resumed, never again to be interrupted. Early in the year following Charles and his sister removed from the Queen Street lodging, where they had continued to reside since his mother's death, to Chapel Street, Pentonville. It appears from a letter of Charles to Coleridge, in the spring of 1800, that there was no alleviation of his burden of constant anxiety. The faithful old servant of many years had died, after a few days' illness, and Lamb writes, "Mary, in consequence of fatigue and anxiety, is fallen ill again, and I was obliged to remove her yesterday. I am left alone in a house with nothing but Hetty's dead body to keep me company. To-morrow I bury her, and then I shall be quite alone with nothing but a cat to remind me that the house has been full of living beings like myself. My heart is quite sunk, and I don't know where to look for relief. Mary will get better again, but

her constantly being liable to these attacks is dreadful; nor is it the least of our evils that her case and all our story is so well known around us. We are in a manner *marked*. Excuse my troubling you, but I have nobody by me to speak to me. I slept out last night, not being able to endure the change and the stillness; but I did not sleep well, and I must come back to my own bed. I am going to try and get a friend to come and be with me to-morrow. I am completely shipwrecked. My head is quite bad. I almost wish that Mary were dead. God bless you. Love to Sarah and little Hartley."

It is the solitary instance in which he allows us to see his patience and hopefulness for a moment failing him. That terrible sentence "we are in a manner *marked*" has not perhaps received its due weight, in the estimate of what the brother and sister were called upon to bear. It seems certain that if they were not actually driven from lodging to lodging, because the dreadful rumour of madness could not be shaken off, they were at least shunned and kept at a distance wherever they went. The rooms in Pentonville they soon received notice to quit, and it was then that Charles turned, perhaps because they were more quiet and secure from vulgar overlooking, to the old familiar and dearly-loved surroundings of his childhood. "I am going to change my lodgings," he writes later in this same year to his Cambridge friend, Manning, in a tone of cheerful looking-forward simply marvellous, considering the immediate cause of the removal. "I am going to change my lodgings, having received a hint that it would be agreeable, at our Lady's next feast. I have partly fixed upon most delectable rooms, which look out (when you stand a tip-toe) over the Thames and Surrey Hills, at the upper end of King's

Bench Walks in the Temple. There I shall have all the privacy of a house without the encumbrance, and shall be able to lock my friends out as often as I desire to hold free converse with my immortal mind—for my present lodgings resemble a minister's levée, I have so increased my acquaintance (as they call 'em) since I have resided in town. Like the country mouse that had tasted a little of urbane manners, I long to be nibbling my own cheese by my dear self, without mouse-traps and time-traps. By my new plan I shall be as airy, up four pair of stairs, as in the country, and in a garden in the midst of enchanting (more than Mahomedan paradise) London, whose dirtiest drab-frequented alley, and her lowest-bowing tradesman, I would not exchange for Skiddaw, Helvellyn, James, Walter, and the parson into the bargain O! her lamps of a night! her rich goldsmiths, print-shops, toy-shops, mercers, hardware men, pastry-cooks, St. Paul's Churchyard, the Strand, Exeter Change, Charing Cross, with the man *upon* a black horse! These are thy gods, O London! Ain't you mightily moped on the banks of the Cam? Had you not better come and set up here? You can't think what a difference. All the streets and pavements are pure gold, I warrant you. At least, I know an alchemy that turns her mud into that metal—a mind that loves to be at home in crowds."

In a letter to Wordsworth, of somewhat later date, replying to an invitation to visit the Lakes, he dwells on the same passionate love for the great city,—the "place of his kindly engendure"—not alone for its sights and sounds, its print-shops, and its bookstalls, but for the human faces, without which the finest scenery failed to satisfy his sense of beauty. "The wonder of these sights," he says, "impels me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I

often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you; so are your rural emotions to me. But consider what must I have been doing all my life not to have lent great portions of my heart with usury to such scenes?"

"What must I have been doing all my life?" This might well be the language of tender retrospect indulged by some man of sixty. It is that of a young man of six-and-twenty. It serves to show us how much of life had been crowded into those few years.

CHAPTER IV.

DRAMATIC AUTHORSHIP AND DRAMATIC CRITICISM.

(1800—1809.)

LAMB was now established in his beloved Temple. For nearly nine years he and his sister resided in Mitre Court Buildings, and for about the same period afterwards within the same sacred precincts, in Inner Temple Lane. Of adventure, domestic or other, his biographer has henceforth little to relate. The track is marked on the one hand by his changes of residence and occasional brief excursions into the country, on the other by the books he wrote and the friendships he formed.

He had written to his friend Manning, as we have seen, how his acquaintance had increased of late. Of such acquaintances Manning himself is the most interesting to us, as having drawn from Lamb a series of letters by far the most important of those belonging to the period before us. Manning was a remarkable person, whose acquaintance Lamb had made on one of his visits to Cambridge during the residence at that University of his friend Lloyd. He was mathematical tutor at Caius, and, in addition to his scientific turn, was possessed by an enthusiasm which in later years he was able to turn to very practical purpose, for exploring the remoter parts of China and Thibet. Lamb had formed a strong admiration for

Manning's genius. He told Crabb Robinson in after years that he was the most "wonderful man" he had ever met. Perhaps the circumstance of Manning's two chief interests in life being so remote from his own, drew Lamb to him by a kind of "sympathy of difference." Certainly he made very happy use of the opportunity for friendly banter thus afforded, and the very absence of a responsive humour in his correspondent seems to have imparted an additional richness to his own. Meantime, to add a few guineas to his scanty income, he was turning this gift of humour to what end he could. For at least three years (from 1800 to 1803) he was an occasional contributor of facetious paragraphs, epigrams, and other trifles to the newspapers of the day. "In those days" as he afterwards told the world in one of the Elia essays (*Newspapers Thirty-five Years Ago*), "every morning paper, as an essential retainer to its establishment, kept an author, who was bound to furnish daily a quantum of witty paragraphs. Sixpence a joke, and it was thought pretty high too—was Dan Stuart's settled remuneration in these cases. The chat of the day, scandal, but above all, *dress*, furnished the material. The length of no paragraph was to exceed seven lines. Shorter they might be, but they must be poignant." Dan Stuart was editor of the *Morning Post*, and Lamb contributed to this paper, and also to the *Chronicle* and the *Albion*. Six jokes a day was the amount he tells us he had to provide during his engagement on the *Post*, and in the essay just cited he dwells with much humour on the misery of rising two hours before breakfast (his days being otherwise fully employed at the India House) to elaborate his jests. "No Egyptian task-master ever devised a slavery like to that, our slavery. Half a dozen jests in a day (bating Sundays

too) why, it seems nothing; we make twice the number every day in our lives as a matter of course, and claim no sabbatical exemptions. But then they come into our head. But when the head has to go out to them, when the mountain must go to Mahomet!" A few samples of Lamb's work in this line have been preserved. One political squib has survived, chiefly perhaps as having served to give the *coup de grace* to a moribund journal, called the *Albion*, which had been only a few weeks before purchased ("on tick doubtless," Lamb says) by that light-hearted spendthrift, John Fenwick, immortalized in another of Lamb's essays (*The Two Races of Men*) as the typical *man who borrows*. The journal had been in daily expectation of being prosecuted, when a (not very scathing) epigram of Lamb's on the apostacy of Sir James Mackintosh, alienated the last of Fenwick's patrons, Lord Stanhope, and the 'murky closet,' "late Rackstraw's museum" in Fleet Street, knew the editor and his contributors no more. Lamb was not called upon to air his Jacobin principles, survivals from his old association with Coleridge and Southey, any further in the newspaper world. "The *Albion* is dead," he writes to Manning, "dead as nail in door—my revenues have died with it; but I am not as a man without hope." He had got a new introduction, through his old friend George Dyer, to the *Morning Chronicle*, under the editorship of Perry. In 1802, we find him again working for the *Post*, but in a different line. Coleridge was contributing to that paper, and was doing his best to obtain for Lamb employment on it of a more dignified character than providing the daily quantum of jokes. He had proposed to furnish Lamb with prose versions of German poems for the latter to turn into metre. Lamb had at first demurred,

on the reasonable ground that Coleridge, whose gift of verse was certainly equal to his own, might as easily do the whole process himself. But the pressure of pecuniary difficulty was great, and a fortnight later he is telling Coleridge that the experiment shall at least be tried. "As to the translations, let me do two or three hundred lines, and then do you try the nostrums upon Stuart in any way you please. If they go down, I will try more. In fact, if I got, or could but get, fifty pounds a year only, in addition to what I have, I should live in affluence." By dint of hard work, much against the grain, he contrived during the year that followed to make double the hoped-for sum; but humour and fancy produced to order could not but fail sooner or later. It came to an end some time in 1803. "The best and the worst to me," he writes to Manning in this year (Lamb rarely dates a letter), "is that I have given up two guineas a week at the *Post*, and regained my health and spirits, which were upon the wane. I grew sick, and Stuart unsatisfied. *Ludisti satis, tempus abire est.* I must cut closer, that's all."

While writing for the newspapers, he had not allowed worthier ambitions to cool. He was still thinking of success in very different fields. As early as the year 1799 he had submitted to Coleridge and Southey a five-act drama in blank verse, with the title of *Pride's Cure*, afterwards changed to *John Woodvil*. His two friends had urgently dissuaded him from publishing, and though he followed this advice, he had not abandoned the hope of seeing it one day upon the stage, and at Christmas of that year had sent it to John Kemble, then manager of Drury Lane. Nearly a year later, having heard nothing in the meantime from the theatre on the subject, he applied to Kemble to know his fate. The answer was

returned that the manuscript was lost, and Lamb had to furnish a second copy. Later, Kemble went so far as to grant the author a personal interview, but the final result was that the play was declined as unsuitable.

That Lamb should ever have dreamed of any other result may well surprise even those who have some experience of the attitude of a young author to his first drama. *John Woodvil* has no quality that could have made its success on the stage possible. It shows no trace of constructive skill, and the character-drawing is of the crudest. By a strange perverseness of choice, Lamb laid the scene of his drama, written in a language for the most part closely imitated from certain Elizabethan models, in the period of the Restoration, and with a strange carelessness introduced side by side with the imagery and rhythm of Fletcher and Massinger a diction often ludicrously incongruous. Perhaps the most striking feature of the play, regarded as a serious effort, is the entire want of keeping in the dialogue. Certain passages have been often quoted, such as that on which Lamb evidently prided himself most, describing the amusements of the exiled baronet and his son in the forest of Sherwood,—

> To see the sun to bed, and to arise
> Like some hot amourist with glowing eyes,
> Bursting the lazy bands of sleep that bound him
> With all his fires and travelling glories round him.
> * * * * *
> To view the leaves, thin dancers upon air,
> Go eddying round, and small birds, how they fare,
> When mother autumn fills their beaks with corn
> Filched from the careless Amalthea's horn.

They serve to show how closely Lamb's fancy and his ear were attuned to the music of Shakespeare and

Shakespeare's contemporaries; but the illusion is suddenly broken by scraps of dialogue sounding the depths of bathos,—

Servant.—Gentlemen, the fireworks are ready.
First Gent.—What be they?
Lovell.—The work of London artists, which our host has provided in honour of this day.

or by such an image as that with which the play concludes, of the penitent John Woodvil, kneeling on the "hassock" in the "family-pew" of St. Mary Ottery, in the "sweet shire of Devon."

Lamb was not deterred by his failure with the managers from publishing his drama. It appeared in a small duodecimo in 1802; and when, sixteen years later, he included it in the first collected edition of his writings, dedicated to Coleridge, he was still able to look with a parent's tenderness upon this child of his early fancy. "When I wrote *John Woodvil*," he says, "Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger, were then a *first love*, and from what I was so freshly conversant in, what wonder if my language imperceptibly took a tinge?" This expresses in fact the real significance of the achievement. Though it is impossible seriously to weigh the merits of *John Woodvil* as a drama, it is yet of interest as the result of the studies of a young man of fine taste and independent judgment in a field of English literature which had lain long unexplored. Within a few years Charles Lamb was to contribute, by more effective methods, to the revived study of the Elizabethan drama, but in the meantime he was doing something, even in *John Woodvil*, to overthrow the despotic conventionalities of eighteenth-century "poetic diction," and to reaccustom the ear to the very different harmonies of an older time.

John Woodvil was noticed in the *Edinburgh Review* for April, 1803. Lamb might have been at that early date too insignificant, personally, to be worth the powder and shot of Jeffrey and his friends, but he was already known as the associate of Coleridge and Southey, and it was this circumstance—as the concluding words of the review rather unguardedly admit—that marked his little volume for the slaughter. He had been already held up to ridicule in the pages of the *Anti-Jacobin*, as sharing the revolutionary sympathies of Coleridge and Southey. It is certainly curious that Lamb, who never "meddled with politics," home or foreign, any more than the *Anti-Jacobin's* knife-grinder himself, should have his name embalmed in that periodical as a leading champion of French Socialism :—

> Coleridge and Southey, Lloyd and Lamb and Co.,
> Tune all your mystic harps to praise Lepeaux.

There was abundant opportunity in Lamb's play for the use of that scourge which the *Edinburgh Review* may be said to have first invented as a critical instrument. Plot and characters, and large portions of the dialogue, lent themselves excellently to the purposes of critical banter, and it was easy to show that Lamb had few qualifications for the task he had undertaken. As he himself observed in his essay on Hogarth : "It is a secret well known to the professors of the art and mystery of criticism, to insist upon what they do not find in a man's works, and to pass over in silence what they do." It was open to the reviewer to note, as even Lamb's friend Southey noted, the "exquisite silliness of the story," but it did not enter into his plan to detect, as Southey had done, the "exquisite beauty" of much of the poetry. The reason why

it is worth while to dwell for a moment on this forgotten review (not, by the way, by Jeffrey, although Lamb's friends seem generally to have attributed it to the editor's own hand) is that it shows how much Lamb was in advance of his reviewer in familiarity with our older literature. The review is a piece of pleasantry, of which it would be absurd to complain, but it is the pleasantry of an ignorant man. The writer affects to regard the play as a specimen of the primeval drama. "We have still among us," he says, "men of the age of Thespis," and declares that "the tragedy of Mr. Lamb may indeed be fairly considered as supplying the first of those lost links which connect the improvements of Æschylus with the commencement of the art." Talfourd expresses wonder that a young critic should "seize on a little eighteen-penny book, simply printed, without any preface: make elaborate merriment of its outline, and, giving no hint of its containing one profound thought or happy expression, leave the reader of the review at a loss to suggest a motive for noticing such vapid absurdities." But there is really little cause for such wonder. The one feature of importance in the little drama is that it here and there imitates with much skill the imagery and the rhythm of a family of dramatists whom the world had been content entirely to forget for nearly two centuries. There is no reason to suppose that Lamb's reviewer had any acquaintance with these dramatists. The interest of the review consists in the evidence it affords of a general ignorance, even among educated men, which Lamb was to do more than any man of his time to dispel. The passage about the sports in the Forest, which set William Godwin (who met with it somewhere as an extract) searching through Beaumont and Fletcher to find, probably conveyed no idea

whatever, to the Edinburgh Reviewer, save that which he honestly confessed, that here was a specimen of versification which had been long ago improved from off the face of the earth.

In the summer of 1802 Charles and his sister spent their holiday, three weeks, with Coleridge at Keswick. The letters to Coleridge and Manning referring to this visit show pleasantly that there was something of affectation in the disparaging tone with which Charles was wont to speak of the charms of scenery. Though on occasion he would make his friends smile by telling that when he ascended Skiddaw he was obliged, in self-defence, to revert in memory to the ham-and-beef shop in St. Martin's Lane, it is evident from his enthusiastic words to Manning that the Lake scenery had moved and delighted him. "Coleridge dwells," he writes to Manning, "upon a small hill by the side of Keswick, in a comfortable house, quite enveloped on all sides by a net of mountains: great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep. We got in in the evening, travelling in a post-chaise from Penrith, in the midst of a gorgeous sunset which transmuted all the mountains into colours, purple, &c. &c. We thought we had got into Fairyland. But that went off (as it never came again, while we stayed we had no more fine sunsets); and we entered Coleridge's comfortable study just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds upon their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose that I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw, &c., I never shall forget ye, how ye lay about that night, like an entrenchment; gone to bed, as it seemed for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning." And later, "We have

clambered up to the top of Skiddaw, and I have waded up the bed of Lodore. In fine, I have satisfied myself that there is such a thing as that which tourists call *romantic*, which I very much suspected before." And again, of Skiddaw, "Oh, its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains all about and about, making you giddy; and then Scotland afar off, and the border countries so famous in song and ballad! It was a day that will stand out like a mountain, I am sure, in my life."

It is pleasant to read of these intervals of bracing air, both to body and mind, in the story of the brother and sister, for the picture of the home life in the Temple lodging at this time, drawn by the same frank hand, is anything but cheerful. This very letter to Manning (who was apparently spending his holiday in Switzerland) goes on to hint of grave anxieties and responsibilities belonging to the life in London. "My habits are changing, I think, i. e. from drunk to sober. Whether I shall be happier or not remains to be proved. I shall certainly be more happy in a morning; but whether I shall not sacrifice the fat, and the marrow, and the kidneys—i. e. the night, glorious care-drowning night, that heals all our wrongs, pours wine into our mortifications, changes the scene from indifferent and flat to bright and brilliant? O Manning, if I should have formed a diabolical resolution by the time you come to England, of not admitting any spirituous liquors into my house, will you be my guest on such shameworthy terms? Is life, with such limitations, worth trying? The truth is that my liquors bring a nest of friendly harpies about my house, who consume me. This is a pitiful tale to be read at St. Gothard, but it is just now nearest my heart."

The tale is indeed a sad one, and we have no reason to suppose it less true than pitiful. There is no concealment on the part of Lamb himself, or his sister, or of those who knew him most intimately, of the fact that from an early age Charles found in wine, or its equivalents, a stimulus that relieved him under the pressure of shyness, anxiety, and low spirits, and that the habit remained with him till the end of his life. It is not easy to deal with this "frailty" (to borrow Talfourd's expression) in Lamb, without falling into an apologetic tone, suggestive of the much-abused proverb connecting excuse with accusation. But it is the biographer's task to account for these things, if not to excuse them, and at this period there is not wanting evidence of hard trials attending the life of the brother and sister which may well prompt a treatment of the subject, the reverse of harsh. There is a correspondence extant of Mary Lamb with Miss Stoddart, who afterwards became the wife of William Hazlitt, which throws much sad light on the history of the joint home during these years. The pressure of poverty was being keenly felt. "I hope, when I write next," she says, early in 1804, "I shall be able to tell you Charles has begun something which will produce a little money: for it is not well to be *very poor*, which we certainly are at this present writing." Charles' engagement as contributor of squibs and occasional paragraphs to the *Morning Post* had come to an end, just before this letter of Mary's: but poverty was not the worst of the home troubles. It is too clear that both brother and sister suffered from constant and harassing depression, and that their heroic determination to live entirely for each other, only made matters worse. "It has been sad and heavy times with us lately," Mary writes in the year following (1805). "When I am pretty

well, his low spirits throw me back again; and when he begins to get a little cheerful, then I do the same kind office for him;" and again, "Do not say anything when you write, of our low spirits—it will vex Charles. You would laugh, or you would cry, perhaps both, to see us sit together, looking at each other with long and rueful faces, and saying 'How do you do?' and 'How do you do?' and then we fall a crying, and say we will be better on the morrow. He says we are like toothache and his friend gum-boil, which though a kind of ease, is but an uneasy kind of ease, a comfort of rather an uncomfortable sort." In the following year we gather that Charles, still bent on success in the drama as the most likely means of adding to his income, had begun to write a farce, and finding the gloom here described intolerable, in such an association, had taken a cheap lodging hard by to which he might retire, and pursue his work without distraction. But the more utter solitude proved as intolerable as the depressing influences of home. "The lodging," writes Mary Lamb, "is given up, and *here he is again*—Charles, I mean—as unsettled and as undetermined as ever. When he went to the poor lodging, after the holidays I told you he had taken, he could not endure the solitariness of them, and I had no rest for the sole of my foot till I promised to believe his solemn protestations that he could and would write as well at home as there."

There is a remark in this same letter, hardly more touching than it is indicative of the clear-sighted wisdom of this true-hearted woman. "Our love for each other," she writes, "has been the torment of our lives hitherto. I am most seriously intending to bend the whole force of my mind to counteract this, and I think I see some prospect of success." It doubtless was this strong

affection, working by ill-considered means, that made much of the unhappiness of Charles Lamb's life. His sense of what he owed to his sister, who had been mother and sister in one, his admiration for her character, and his profound pity for her affliction, made him resolve that no other tie, no other taste or pleasure, should interfere with the prime duty of cleaving to her as long as life should last. But this exclusive devotion was not a good thing for either. They wanted some strong human interests from outside to assist them to bear those of home. They were both fond of society. In their later more prosperous days they saw much society of a brilliant and notable sort, but already Charles had made the discovery that "open house" involved temptation of a kind he had not learnt to resist. The little suppers, at home and with friends elsewhere, meant too much punch and too much tobacco, and the inevitable sequel of depression and moroseness on the morrow. "He came home very *smoky and drinky* last night," is the frequent burden of Miss Lamb's letters. And so it came to pass that his social life was spent too much between these two extremes —the companionship of that one sister, anxiety for whose health was always pressing, and whose inherited instincts were too like his own, and the convivialities which banished melancholy for a while and set his fancy and his speech at liberty, but too often did *not* bear the morning's reflection. He needed at this time fewer companions, but more friends. Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, Manning, were all out of London, and only in his scanty holidays, or on occasion of their rare visits to town, could he take counsel with them.

One pleasant gleam of sunshine among the driving clouds of those years of anxiety is afforded in the lines

on Hester Savary. During the few months that Lamb and his sister lodged at Pentonville in 1800, he had fallen in love (for the second and last time) with a young Quakeress. In sending the verses to Manning (in Paris) in 1803, Lamb recalls the old attachment as one his friend would remember having heard him mention. However ardent it may have been, it was presumably without hope of requital, for Lamb admits that he had never spoken to the lady in his life. He may have met her daily in his walks to and from the office, or have watched her week by week on her way to that Quaker's meeting he has so lovingly described elsewhere. And now, only a month before, she had died, and Lamb's true vein, unspoiled by squibs and paragraphs written to order for party journals, flows once more in its native purity and sweetness :—

When maidens such as Hester die
Their place ye may not well supply,
Though ye among a thousand try
With vain endeavour.
A month or more hath she been dead,
Yet cannot I by force be led
To think upon the wormy bed
And her together.

A springy motion in her gait,
A rising step, did indicate
Of pride and joy no common rate
That flushed her spirit.
I know not by what name beside
I shall it call : if 'twas not pride,
It was a joy to that allied
She did inherit.

Her parents held the Quaker rule
Which doth the human spirit cool ;

But she was trained in Nature's school,
Nature had blest her.
A waking eye, a prying mind,
A heart that stirs, is hard to bind:
A hawk's keen sight ye cannot blind,
Ye could not Hester.

My sprightly neighbour, gone before
To that unknown and silent shore,
Shall we not meet, as heretofore,
Some summer morning—
When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
A bliss that would not go away,
A sweet fore-warning?

These charming verses are themselves a "sweet fore-warning" of happier times to come. New friends were at hand, and new interests in literature were soon to bring a little cheerful relief to the monotony of the Temple lodging. We have already heard something of a play in preparation. The first intimation of Lamb's resolve to tempt dramatic fortune once again is in a letter to Wordsworth, in September, 1805. "I have done nothing," he writes, "since the beginning of last year, when I lost my newspaper job, and having had a long idleness, I must do something, or we shall get very poor. Sometimes I think of a farce, but hitherto all schemes have gone off; an idle brag or two of an evening, vapouring out of a pipe, and going off in the morning; but now I have bid farewell to my 'sweet enemy' tobacco, as you will see in the next page, I shall perhaps set nobly to work. Hang work!" He did set to work, in good heart, during the six months that followed. Mary Lamb's letters contain frequent references to the farce in progress, and before Midsummer, 1806, it was completed, and accepted by the proprietors of Drury Lane. The farce was the celebrated *Mr. H.*

No episode of Lamb's history is better known than the production, and the summary failure of this *jeu d'esprit*. That it failed is no matter for surprise, and most certainly none for regret. Though it had the advantage, in its leading character, of the talent of Elliston, the best light-comedian of his day, the slightness of the interest (dealing with the inconveniences befalling a gentleman who is ashamed to confess that his real name is Hogsflesh) was too patent for the best acting to contend against. Crabb Robinson, one of Lamb's more recent friends, accompanied the brother and sister to the first and only performance, and received the impression that the audience resented the vulgarity of the name, when it was at last revealed, rather than the flimsiness of the plot. But the latter is quite sufficient to account for what happened. The curtain fell amid a storm of hisses, in which Lamb is said to have taken a conspicuous share. Indeed, his genuine critical faculty must have come to his deliverance when he thus viewed his own work from the position of an outsider. He expresses no surprise at the result, after the first few utterances of natural disappointment. The mortification must have been considerable. The brother and sister had looked forward to a success. They sorely needed the money it might have brought them, and Charles' deep-seated love of all things dramatic made success in that field a much cherished hope. But he bore his failure, as he bore all his disappointments in life, with a cheerful sweetness. He writes to Hazlitt: "Mary is a little cut at the ill-success of *Mr H.*, which came out last night and *failed*. I know you'll be sorry, but never mind. We are determined not to be cast down. I am going to leave off tobacco, and then we must thrive. A smoky man must write smoky farces." It must be

admitted that *Mr. H.* is not much better in reading than it was found in the acting. Its humour, consisting largely of puns and other verbal pleasantries, exhibits little or nothing of Lamb's native vein, and the dialogue is too often laboriously imitated from the conventional comedy-dialogue then in vogue. But even had this been different, the lack of constructive ability already shown in *John Woodvil* must have made success as a writer for the stage quite beyond his reach.

He was on safer ground, though not perhaps working so thoroughly *con amore*, in another literary enterprise of this time. In 1805, he had made the acquaintance of William Hazlitt, and Hazlitt had introduced him to William Godwin. Godwin had started, as his latest venture, a series of books for children, to which he himself contributed under the name of Edward Baldwin. Lamb, writing to his friend Manning, in May, 1806, thus describes a joint task in which he and his sister were engaged in connexion with this scheme: "She is doing for Godwin's bookseller twenty of Shakespeare's plays, to be made into children's tales. Six are already done by her, to wit, *The Tempest*, *Winter's Tale*, *Midsummer Night*, *Much Ado*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Cymbeline;* and the *Merchant of Venice* is in forwardness. I have done *Othello* and *Macbeth*, and mean to do all the tragedies. I think it will be popular among the little people, besides money. It's to bring in sixty guineas. Mary has done them capitally, I think you'd think." Mary herself supplements this account in a way that makes curiously vivid to us the homely realities of their joint life. She writes about the same time: "Charles has written *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and has begun *Hamlet*. You would like to see us, as we often sit writing

on one table (but not on one cushion sitting), like *Hermia* and *Helena*, in the *Midsummer Night's Dream;* or rather like an old literary Darby and Joan, I taking snuff, and he groaning all the while, and saying he can make nothing of it, which he always says till he has finished, and then he finds out he has made something of it." Writing these *Tales from Shakespeare* was no doubt task-work to the brother and sister, but it was task-work on a congenial theme, and one for which they had special qualifications. They had, to start with, a profound and intimate acquaintance with their original, which set them at an infinite distance from the usual compilers of such books for children. They had, moreover, command of a style, Wordsworthian in its simplicity and purity, that enabled them to write down to the level of a child's understanding, without any appearance of condescension. The very homeliness of the style may easily divert attention from the rare critical faculty, the fine analysis of character, that marks the writers' treatment of the several plays. It is no wonder that the publisher in announcing a subsequent edition was able to boast that a book designed for young children had been found suitable for those of more advanced age. There is, indeed, no better introduction to the study of Shakespeare than these *Tales*—no better initiation into the mind of Shakespeare, and into the subtleties of his language and rhythm. For the ear of both Charles and Mary Lamb had been trained on the cadences of Elizabethan English, and they were able throughout to weave the very words of Shakespeare into their narrative without producing any effect of discrepancy between the old and the new.

The *Tales* were published in 1807, and were a success, a second edition appearing in the following year. One

result of this success was a commission from Godwin to make another version of a great classic for the benefit of children, the story of the *Odyssey*. Lamb was no Greek scholar, but he had been, like Keats, stirred by the rough vigour of Chapman's translation. "Chapman is divine," he said afterwards to Bernard Barton, "and my abridgment has not quite emptied him of his divinity." And the few words of preface with which he modestly introduced his little book as a supplement to that well-known school classic the *Adventures of Telemachus*, shows that the moral value of this record of human vicissitude had moved him not less than the variety of the adventure. "The picture which he exhibits," he writes, "is that of a brave man struggling with adversity; by a wise use of events, and with an inimitable presence of mind under difficulties, forcing out a way for himself through the severest trials to which human life can be exposed; with enemies natural and supernatural surrounding him on all sides. The agents in this tale, besides men and women, are giants, enchanters, sirens; things which denote external force or internal temptations, the two-fold danger which a wise fortitude must expect to encounter in its course through this world." We cannot be wrong in judging that Charles Lamb had seen in this "wisdom of the ancients" an image of sirens and enchanters, of trials and disciplines, that beset the lonely dweller at home not less surely than the wanderer from city to city, and had found therein something of a cordial and a tonic for himself. No one felt more repugnance than did Lamb to the appending of a formal moral to a work of art, to use his own comparison, like the "God send the good ship safe into harbour" at the end of a bill of lading. But it was to be his special note as a critic that he could not keep his human com-

passion from blending with his judgment of every work of human imagination. If his strength as a critic was—and remains for us—as the "strength of ten," it was because his heart was pure.

To what masterly purpose he had been long training this faculty of criticism he was now about to show. The letter to Manning, which tells of his *Adventures of Ulysses*, announces a more important undertaking—apparently a commission from the firm of Longman—*Specimens of English Dramatic Poets contemporary with Shakespeare*. "Specimens," he writes, "are becoming fashionable. We have *Specimens of Ancient English Poets*, *Specimens of Modern English Poets*, *Specimens of Ancient English Prose Writers*, without end. They used to be called 'Beauties.' You have seen *Beauties of Shakespeare?* so have many people that never saw any beauties *in* Shakespeare." But Lamb's method was to have little in common with that of the unfortunate Dr. Dodd. "It is to have notes," is the brief mention of that feature of the collection which was at once to place their author in the first rank of critics. The commentary, often extending to no more than a dozen or twenty lines appended to each scene, or each author chosen for illustration, was of a kind new to a generation accustomed to the *Variorum* school of annotator. It contains no philology, no antiquarianism, no discussion of difficult or corrupt passages. It takes its character from the principle set forth in the Preface on which the selection of scenes is made:—

> The kind of extracts which I have sought after have been, not so much passages of wit and humour—though the old plays are rich in such—as scenes of passion, sometimes of the deepest quality, interesting situations, serious descriptions, that which is more nearly allied to poetry than to wit, and to tragic rather

than comic poetry. The plays which I have made choice of have been with few exceptions those which treat of human life and manners, rather than masques and Arcadian Pastorals, with their train of abstractions, unimpassioned deities, passionate mortals, Claius, and Medorus, and Amintas, and Amaryllis. My leading design has been to illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors. To show in what manner they felt when they placed themselves by the power of imagination in trying situations, in the conflicts of duty and passion, or the strife of contending duties; what sort of loves and enmities theirs were; how their griefs were tempered, and their full-swoln joys abated; how much of Shakespeare shines in the great men his contemporaries, and how far in his divine mind and manners he surpassed them and all mankind.

The very idea of the collection was a bold one. When we cast our eye over the list of now familiar names, Marlowe and Peele, Marston, Chapman, Ford, and Webster, from whom Lamb chose his scenes, we must not forget that he was pleading their merits before a public which knew them only as names, if it knew them at all. With the one exception of Shakespeare, the dramatists of the period, between "the middle of Elizabeth's reign and the close of the reign of Charles I.," were unknown to the general reader of the year 1808. Shakespeare, indeed, had a permanent stage-existence—that best of commentaries which fine acting supplies, to which Lamb himself had been from childhood so largely indebted. But for those who studied him in the closet there was no aid to his interpretation save such as was supplied by the very unilluminating notes of Johnson or Malone. And this circumstance must be taken into account if we would rightly estimate the genius of Lamb. As a critic he had no master—it might almost be said, no predecessor. He was the inventor of his own art. As the friend of Cole-

ridge, he might have heard something of that school of dramatic criticism of which Lessing was the founder, but there is little trace of any such influence in Lamb's own critical method. And though, three years later, Coleridge was to make another contribution of value to the same cause, in the Lectures on Shakespeare delivered at the London Philosophical Society, it is likely that his obligations were at least as great to Lamb, as those of Lamb had ever been, in the same field, to Coleridge.

The suggestion in the preface, already cited, of Shakespeare as the representative dramatist, the standard by which his contemporaries must be content to be judged, is amply followed up in the notes, and gives a unity of its own to a collection so miscellaneous. I may refer, as examples, to the masterly distinction drawn between the use made of the supernatural by Middleton in the *Witch*, and by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, and again to the contrast indicated between the Dirge in Webster's *White Devil* and the "Ditty which reminds Ferdinand of his drowned father in the *Tempest*"—"as that is of the water, watery; so is this of the earth, earthy. Both have that intenseness of feeling which seems to resolve itself into the elements which it contemplates,"—a criticism which could only have been conceived by one who was himself a poet. How admirably again does he draw attention (in a note on the *Merry Devil of Edmonton*) to that feature of Shakespeare's genius which perhaps more than any other is forced upon the reader's mind as he turns from passage to passage in this collection:—"This scene has much of Shakespeare's manner in the sweetness and good-naturedness of it. It seems written to make the reader happy. Few of our dramatists or novelists have attended enough to this. They torture and wound us abundantly. They are

economists only in delight." Nothing, again, can be more profound than his remark on the elaborate and ostentatious saintliness of Ordella (in Fletcher's *Thierry and Theodoret*). "Shakespeare had nothing of this contortion in his mind, none of that craving after romantic incidents, and flights of strained and improbable virtue, which I think always betray an imperfect moral sensibility." And yet though Lamb's fine judgment approved the fidelity to nature, and the artistic self-control, which he here emphasises in his great model, it is clear that the audacious conceptions, both of character and situation, in which writers such as Ford and Tourneur indulged, had no small fascination for him. As he recalled the dreary types of virtue, the "insipid levelling morality to which the modern stage is tied down," he turned with joy—as from a heated saloon into the fresh air—to the "vigorous passions" the "virtues clad in flesh and blood," with which the old dramatists presented him. And this joy in the presentment of the naked human soul is felt throughout all his criticisms on the more terrible scenes of Shakespeare's successors. His "ears tingle," or his eyes fill, or his heart leaps within him, as Calantha dies of her Broken Heart, or Webster's Duchess yields slowly to the torture. Hence it is that Lamb's criticism as often takes the form of a study of human life, as of the dramatist's art. And hence also the effect he often leaves of having indulged in praise too great for the occasion. There is, moreover, another reason for this last-named result, which was inseparable from Lamb's method. No two dramatists can be measured by comparing passage with passage, scene with scene. Shakespeare and Marlowe cannot be compared or contrasted by setting the death of Edward II. side by side with that of Richard II. Drama must be put side by side

with drama. Lamb does not indeed suggest, by anything that he says, that the rank of a dramatist can be decided by passages or extracts. Only it did not enter into his scheme to dwell upon that supreme art of construction, and that highest gift of characterization, which are needed to make the perfect dramatist. In "profoundness of single thoughts," in "richness of imagery," in "abundance of illustration," he could produce passage after passage from Shakespeare's contemporaries that evinced genius nearly allied to Shakespeare's; but of that "fundamental excellence" which "distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur, that power of execution which creates, forms, and constitutes," it was not possible for him to supply example. And this reservation the student must be prepared to make, who would approach the study of the Elizabethan Drama by the aid of Charles Lamb's specimens.

But, whatever qualification must be interposed, it is certain that the publication of these extracts, and the accompanying commentary, has a well-defined place in the poetical renascence that marked the early years of this century. The revived study of the old English dramatists—other than Shakespeare—dates from this publication. Coleridge had not yet begun to lecture, nor Hazlitt to write, and it was not till some twenty years later that Mr. Dyce began his different, but not less important, labours in the same field. To Lamb must be allowed the credit of having first recalled attention to a range of poetical excellence, in forgetfulness of which English poetry had too long pined and starved. It was to these mountain-heights of inspiration—not to the cultivated lowlands of the eighteenth century—that poetry was to turn her eyes for help.

CHAPTER V.

INNER TEMPLE LANE—PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS.

(1809—1817.)

TALFOURD made the acquaintance of Charles Lamb early in the year 1815, and has recorded the impression left by his appearance and manner at that time in words which at this stage of our memoir it may be convenient to quote. Lamb has been fortunate in his verbal describers, if not in the attempts of the painter's art to convey a true idea of his outward man. Leigh Hunt has declared that "there never was a true portrait of Lamb"—and those who take the trouble to examine in succession the half-dozen portraits that are in existence are obliged to admit that it is difficult to derive from them any consistent idea of his features and expression. But it so happens that we have full length portraits of him drawn by other hands, which more than compensate for this want. Poets, critics, and humourists, of kindred genius, have left on record how Charles Lamb appeared to them; and though the various accounts bear, as might be expected, the strong impress of their writers' individuality, and though each naturally gives most prominence to the traits that struck him most, the final impression left is one of agreement, in remarkable degree. We have descriptions of Lamb, all possessing points of great

interest by Talfourd, Procter, Hood, Patmore, and others, and from these it is possible to learn how their subject looked and spoke and bore himself, with a precision and vividness that we are seldom in such cases allowed to enjoy. I have the advantage of being able to confirm their accounts by the testimony of a living witness. Mr. James Crossley, of Manchester, has related to me his recollections of more than one interview which he had with Lamb, nearly sixty years ago, and has kindly allowed me to make use of them.

Talfourd's reminiscence, committed to writing shortly after Lamb's death, if slightly idealized by his own poetic temperament, is not for that reason a less satisfactory basis on which to form a conception of Charles Lamb's appearance. "Methinks I see him before me now, as he appeared then, and as he continued with scarcely any perceptible alteration to me, during the twenty years of intimacy which followed, and were closed by his death. A light frame, so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would overthrow it, clad in clerk-like black, was surmounted by a head of form and expression the most noble and sweet. His black hair curled crisply about an expanded forehead; his eyes, softly brown, twinkled with varying expression, though the prevalent feeling was sad; and the nose slightly curved, and delicately carved at the nostril, with the lower outline of the face regularly oval, completed a head which was finely placed on the shoulders, and gave importance and even dignity to a diminutive and shadowy stem. Who shall describe his countenance, catch its quivering sweetness, and fix it for ever in words? There are none, alas, to answer the vain desire of friendship. Deep thought, striving with humour; the lines of suffering wreathed into cordial mirth; and a smile of painful

sweetness, present an image to the mind it can as little describe as lose. His personal appearance and manner are not unfitly characterized by what he himself says in one of his letters to Manning, of Braham, 'a compound of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel.'"

From this tender and charming sketch it is instructive to turn to the rude etching on copper made by Mr. Brook Pulham from life, in the year 1825, which in the opinion of Lamb's biographers (and Mr. Crossley confirms their judgment) gives a better idea than all other existing portraits, of Charles Lamb's outward man. The small stature —he was very noticeably below the middle height—the head apparently out of proportion to the slender frame, the Jewish cast of nose, the long black hair, the figure dwindling away down to "almost immaterial legs," the tight-fitting clerk-like suit of black, terminating in gaiters and straps, all these appear in Mr. Pulham's etching in such bold realism that the portrait might easily pass for a caricature, were it not confirmed in all its details by other authorities. Mr. Crossley recalls with perfect distinctness the aspect of Lamb as he sat at his desk in his room at the India House, looking the more diminutive for being perched upon a very high stool. His hair and complexion were so dark, that when looked at in combination with the complete suit of solemn black, they suggested old Fuller's description of the negro, of which Lamb was so fond—an image "cut in ebony." He might have passed, Hood tells us, for a "Quaker in black." "He had a long melancholy face," says Mr. Procter, "with keen penetrating eyes." "There was altogether," Mr. Patmore says, "a Rabbinical look about Lamb's head which was at once striking and impressive." But the feature of his expression that all his friends dwell on

with most loving emphasis is "the bland sweet smile, with the touch of sadness in it;" and Mr. Patmore's description of the general impression produced by this countenance well sums up and confirms the testimony of all other friends: "In point of intellectual character and expression, a finer face was never seen, nor one more fully, however vaguely corresponding with the mind whose features it interpreted. There was the gravity usually engendered by a life passed in book learning, without the slightest tinge of that assumption and affectation which almost always attend the gravity so engendered; the intensity and elevation of general expression that mark high genius, without any of its pretension and its oddity; the sadness waiting on fruitless thoughts and baffled aspirations, but no evidence of that spirit of scorning and contempt which these are apt to engender. Above all there was a pervading sweetness and gentleness which went straight to the heart of every one who looked on it: and not the less so, perhaps, that it bore about it an air, a something, seeming to tell that it was—not *put on*—for nothing would be more unjust than to tax Lamb with assuming anything, even a virtue, which he did not possess—but preserved and persevered in, spite of opposing and contradictory feelings within that struggled in vain for mastery. It was a thing to remind you of that painful smile which bodily disease and agony will sometimes put on, to conceal their sufferings from the observation of those they love."

We know Charles Lamb's history, and have not to ask for any explanation of the appearances thus described. He had always (it must not be forgotten) to contend against sad memories, and anticipations of further sorrow. He was by nature "terribly shy," and his difficulties of speech, and

possibly a consciousness of oddity of manner and appearance, aggravated this diffidence. It was "terrible" to him —as he confessed to Mr. Procter one morning when they were going together to breakfast with Rogers—to undergo the scrutiny of servants. Hence only at times, and in certain companies, was he entirely at his ease; and it is evident that when in the society of those in sympathy with him and his tastes, he conveyed an entirely different impression of himself from that left under the opposite circumstances. Before strangers, or uncongenial acquaintance, he was uncomfortable, and if not actually silent, generally indulged in some line of conversation or vein of sentiment foreign to his own real nature. Like most men, Charles Lamb had various oddnesses, contradictions, perverseneses of temper, and unless he was in company of those who loved him (and who he *knew* loved him), and understood him, he was very prone, in a spirit of what children call "contrariness," to set to work to alienate them still more from any possibility of sympathy with him. Something of this must of course be laid to the account of the extra glass of wine or spirits that so often determined his mood for the evening, only that when Procter, or Talfourd, or Coleridge, or Hazlitt were round his hospitable table, this stimulus served but to set free the richer and more generous springs of thought and fancy within him. I have the authority of Mr. Crossley for saying that on one evening when in manner, speech, and walk, Lamb was obviously under the influence of what he had drunk, he discoursed at length upon Milton, with a fulness of knowledge, an eloquence, and a profundity of critical power, which left an impression upon Mr. Crossley, never to be effaced. But we know that the wine was not in this case the good, any more than on

other occasions it was the evil, influence. "It *created* nothing," says Mr. Patmore, "but it was the talisman that not only unlocked the poor casket in which the rich thoughts of Charles Lamb were shut up, but set in motion that machinery in the absence of which they would have lain like gems in the mountain or gold in the mine." But where the society was unsympathetic, the wine often set free less lovable springs of fancy in Charles Lamb. He would take up a perverse attitude of contradiction, with too slight regard for the courtesies of human intercourse, or else give play to a mere spirit of reckless and not very edifying mockery. The same enthusiastic friend and admirer just quoted is obliged to admit that "to those who did not know him, or knowing, did not and could not appreciate him, Lamb often passed for something between an imbecile, a brute, and a buffoon; and the first impression he made on ordinary people was always unfavourable, sometimes to a violent and repulsive degree." Many persons have of late been startled by the discovery that Lamb sometimes left the same impression upon people the reverse of ordinary. Nothing perhaps in the Reminiscences of Thomas Carlyle has provoked so much surprise, and hurt so many feelings, as his passing criticism upon Lamb. And yet it is entirely supported and explained by Mr. Patmore's observation. No two persons could have been more antipathetic than Lamb and Carlyle, and nothing therefore is less surprising than that to the author of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* Charles and his sister should have appeared two very "sorry phenomena," or that the scraps of Lamb's talk which he overheard during a passing call should often have seemed "contemptibly small," "ghastly make-believe of wit," and the rest. There is no need to question the substantial justice of this report. It

is only too probable that the presence of the austere and dyspeptic Scotchman (one of that nation Lamb had all his days been trying in vain to like) made him more than usually disposed to produce his entire stock of frivolity. He had a perverse delight in shocking uncongenial society. Another noticeable person—very different in all respects from Carlyle—has left a record, significant by its very brevity, of his single interview with Lamb. Macready tells in his diary how he was asked to meet him at Talfourd's, and this is what he records of the interview: "I noted one odd saying of Lamb's, that 'the last breath he drew in he wished might be through a pipe, and exhaled in a pun.'" Lamb may have discovered at a glance that he and the great tragedian were not likely to take the same views of men and things. Perhaps his love both for joking and smoking had struck Macready the reverse of favourably, and if so, it was quite in Lamb's way to clench once for all the unfavourable impression by such an "odd saying" as that just quoted.

Charles Lamb has drawn for us a character of himself, but, so fond was he of hoaxes and mystifications of this kind, that we might have hesitated to accept it as faithful, were it not in such precise accord with the testimony of others already cited. The second series of the *Essays of Elia* was introduced by a Preface, purporting to be written "by a friend of the late Elia," but of course from Charles's own hand. In this preface he assumes Elia to have actually died, and after some preliminary remarks on his writings thus proceeds to describe his character and manners:—

My late friend was in many respects a singular character. Those who did not like him, hated him; and some, who once liked him, afterwards became his bitterest haters. The truth is, he gave himself too little concern what he uttered, and in

whose presence. He observed neither time nor place, and would e'en out with what came uppermost. With the severe religionist he would pass for a free-thinker; while the other faction set him down for a bigot, or persuaded themselves that he belied his sentiments. Few understood him, and I am not certain that at all times he quite understood himself. He too much affected that dangerous figure—irony. He sowed doubtful speeches, and reaped plain, unequivocal hatred. He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest; and yet, perhaps, not quite irrelevant in ears that could understand it. Your long and much talkers hated him. The informal habit of his mind, joined to an inveterate impediment of speech, forbade him to be an orator; and he seemed determined that no one else should play that part when he was present. He was *petit* and ordinary in his person and appearance. I have seen him sometimes in what is called good company, but where he has been a stranger, sit silent and be suspected for an odd fellow; till some unlucky occasion provoking it, he would stutter out some senseless pun (not altogether senseless, perhaps, if rightly taken) which has stamped his character for the evening. It was hit or miss with him; but nine times out of ten he contrived by this device to send away a whole company his enemies. His conceptions rose kindlier than his utterance, and his happiest *impromptus* had the appearance of effort. He has been accused of trying to be witty, when in truth he was but struggling to give his poor thoughts articulation. He chose his companions for some individuality of character which they manifested. Hence not many persons of science, and few professed *literati*, were of his councils. They were, for the most part, persons of an uncertain fortune; and as to such people commonly nothing is more obnoxious than a gentleman of settled (though moderate) income, he passed with most of them for a great miser. To my knowledge this was a mistake. His *intimados*, to confess a truth, were in the world's eye a ragged regiment. He found them floating on the surface of society; and the colour, or something else, in the weed pleased him. The burrs stuck to him; but they were good and loving burrs for all that. He never greatly

cared for the society of what are called good people. If any of these were scandalized (and offences were sure to arise) he could not help it. When he has been remonstrated with for not making more concessions to the feelings of good people, he would retort by asking what one point did these good people ever concede to him? He was temperate in his meals and diversions, but always kept a little on this side of abstemiousness. Only in the use of the Indian weed he might be thought a little excessive. He took it, he would say, as a solvent of speech. Marry—as the friendly vapour ascended, how his prattle would curl up sometimes with it! the ligaments which tongue-tied him were loosened, and the stammerer proceeded a statist!

When a man's account of himself—his foibles and eccentricities—is confirmed in minutest detail by those who knew and loved him best, it is reasonable to conclude that we are not far wrong in accepting it, and this self-portraiture of Lamb's gives an unexpected plausibility to the judgments, which otherwise have a harsh sound, of Mr. Patmore and Carlyle. The peculiarities which Lamb here enumerates are just those which are little likely ever to receive gentle consideration from the world.

Lamb's mention of the "senseless pun" which often "stamped his character for the evening," suggests opportunely the subject of his reputation as a humourist and wit. This habit of playing upon words was a part of him through life, and as in the case of most who indulge in it, became an outlet for whatever mood was for the moment dominant in Charles Lamb's mind. When he was ill at ease, and in an attitude (as he often was) of antagonism to his company, it would take the shape of a wanton interruption of the argument under discussion. To use a simile of Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, it was the halfpenny laid upon the line by a mischievous boy to

upset a whole train of cars. When he was annoyed, he made annoying puns,—when he was frivolous, he made frivolous puns, but when he was in the cue, and his surroundings were such as to call forth his better powers, he put into this form of wit, humour and imagination of a high order. Samples of all these kinds have been preserved, and are not without use as showing the various moods of his many-sided nature, but it is pitiable to read long strings of them, set down without any discrimination, and to be asked to accept them as specimens of Lamb's "wit and humour." Many of his jests thus handed down are little more than amusing evidence of a restless levity, and almost petulant impatience of the restraints of serious discourse. Much of his conversational humour took the form of retort—courteous, or the reverse. Sometimes these embodied a criticism so luminous or acute that they have survived, not only for their drollery, or even their severity. "Charles, did you ever hear me preach?" asked Coleridge, referring to the days of his Unitarian ministry. "I never heard you do anything else," was the reply. When Wordsworth was discussing with him the degree of originality to be allowed to Shakespeare, as borrowing his plots from sources ready to his hand, and was even hinting that other poets, with the *History of Hamblet* before them, might have been equally successful in adapting it to the stage, Charles cried out, "Oh! here's Wordsworth says he could have written *Hamlet*, if *he'd had the mind*." In both these cases the retort embodies a felicitous judgment. A foible—if in either case it is to be called a foible—in the character of the two poets, respectively, flashes out into sudden light. The pun is more than a pun; the wit is more than wit; it is a sudden glory of truth kindled by the imagination. Lamb's wide reading and memory give

a peculiar flavour to much of his wit. He had a way of applying quotations which is all his own. When Crabb Robinson, then a new-fledged barrister, told him of his sensations on getting his first brief in the King's Bench, "I suppose," said Charles, "you said to it, 'Thou great First Cause, least understood.'" Somebody remarking on Shakespeare's anachronisms—clocks and watches in *Julius Cæsar*, oracles of Delphi in the *Winter's Tale*—he said he supposed that was what Dr. Johnson meant when he wrote of him that "panting Time toiled after him in vain." Hood records a visit paid by him to the Lambs when they were living at Islington, with a wasp's nest near their front door. "He was one day bantering my wife on her dread of wasps, when all at once he uttered a terrible shout—a wounded specimen of the species had slily crawled up the leg of the table, and stung him in the thumb. I told him it was a refutation well put in, like Smollett's timely snowball. 'Yes,' said he, 'and a stinging commentary on Macbeth,—

> By the pricking of my thumbs,
> Something wicked this way comes."

Readers of the *Essays of Elia* will recall many happy effects produced by this novel use of familiar quotations. Not that he ever condescended to degrade a really fine passage by any vulgar associations. No great harm was done (in the "Essay on Roast Pig") by calling in his friend's "Epitaph on an infant" to justify the sacrifice of the innocent suckling, before it should "grow up to the grossness and indocility which too often accompany maturer swinehood,—

> Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade
> Death came with timely care."

And, now and then, with the true instinct of a poet, he throws a new and lasting halo over a homely object by associating it with one more poetic and dignified, as when in the "Praise of Chimney-sweepers" he notes the brilliant white of the little climbing-boys' teeth peering from between their sooty lips—"It is," he adds—

> "as when a sable cloud
> Turns forth her silver lining on the night,"

an application of Milton which is only *not* witty, (to borrow Sydney Smith's skilful distinction) because the enjoyment of its wit is overpowered by our admiration of its beauty.

"Specimens of wit and humour" afford, under the happiest conditions, but melancholy reading, and none can less well afford to be separated from their context than those of Lamb. And in his case the context is not merely that of the written or spoken matter, but that of the man himself—his look, manner, and habits. To understand how his drollery affected those who were present, and made them anxious to preserve some record of it, it is necessary to keep in mind how he looked and spoke, his odd face, his stammer, and his wilfulness in the presence of uncongenial natures. There is a diverting scene recorded in the diary of Haydon, the painter, which, however amplified by Haydon's facile pen, seems to bring before us "an evening with Charles Lamb" with more reality than the general recollections of Talfourd and Procter. Something of the "diluted insanity" that so shocked Mr. Carlyle is here shadowed forth. Haydon had got up a little dinner, on occasion of Wordsworth being in town (December, 1817), and Lamb and Keats were of the party. The account must be given in his own words:—

On December 28th the immortal dinner came off in my painting-room, with Jerusalem towering up behind us as a background. Wordsworth was in fine cue, and we had a glorious set-to—on Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Virgil. Lamb got exceedingly merry, and exquisitely witty; and his fun, in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory, was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion. He made a speech and voted me absent, and made them drink my health. "Now," said Lamb, "you old lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?" We all defended Wordsworth, and affirmed there was a state of mind when Voltaire would be dull. "Well," said Lamb, "here's Voltaire—the Messiah of the French nation—and a very proper one too."

He then in a strain of humour beyond description abused me for putting Newton's head into my picture—"a fellow," said he, "who believed nothing unless it was as clear as the three sides of a triangle." And then he and Keats agreed that he had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow, by reducing it to the prismatic colours. It was impossible to resist him, and we all drank "Newton's health, and confusion to mathematics." It was delightful to see the good humour of Wordsworth in giving in to all our frolics without affectation, and laughing as heartily as the best of us.

By this time other friends joined, amongst them poor Ritchie, who was going to penetrate by Fezzan to Timbuctoo. I introduced him to all as "a gentleman going to Africa." Lamb seemed to take no notice; but all of a sudden he roared out "Which is the gentleman we are going to lose?" We then drank the victim's health, in which Ritchie joined.

In the morning of this delightful day, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called on me. He said he knew my friends, had an enthusiasm for Wordsworth, and begged I would procure him the happiness of an introduction. He told me he was a Comptroller of Stamps, and often had correspondence with the poet. I thought it a liberty; but still, as he seemed a gentleman, I told him he might come.

When we retired to tea we found the Comptroller. In intro-

ducing him to Wordsworth I forgot to say who he was. After a little time the Comptroller looked down, looked up, and said to Wordsworth, "Don't you think, sir, Milton was a great genius?" Keats looked at me, Wordsworth looked at the Comptroller. Lamb, who was dozing by the fire, turned round and said, "Pray, sir, did you say Milton was a great genius?" "No, sir, I asked Mr. Wordsworth if he were not." "Oh," said Lamb, "then you are a silly fellow." "Charles! my dear Charles!" said Wordsworth; but Lamb, perfectly innocent of the confusion he had created, was off again by the fire.

After an awful pause the Comptroller said, "Don't you think Newton a great genius?" I could not stand it any longer. Keats put his head into my books. Ritchie squeezed in a laugh. Wordsworth seemed asking himself, "Who is this?" Lamb got up and taking a candle, said, "Sir, will you allow me to look at your phrenological development?" He then turned his back on the poor man, and at every question of the Comptroller he chanted—

"Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son John
Went to bed with his breeches on."

The man in office finding Wordsworth did not know who he was, said in a spasmodic and half-chucking anticipation of assured victory, "I have had the honour of some correspondence with you, Mr Wordsworth." "With me, sir?" said Wordsworth, "not that I remember." "Don't you, sir? I am a Comptroller of Stamps." There was a dead silence; the Comptroller evidently thinking that was enough. While we were waiting for Wordsworth's reply, Lamb sung out—

"Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle."

"My dear Charles!" said Wordsworth.

"Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son John,"

chanted Lamb; and then rising, exclaimed, "Do let me have

another look at that gentleman's organs." Keats and I hurried Lamb into the painting-room, shut the door, and gave way to inextinguishable laughter. Monkhouse followed and tried to get Lamb away. We went back, but the Comptroller was irreconcilable. We soothed and smiled, and asked him to supper. He stayed, though his dignity was sorely affected. However, being a good-natured man, we parted all in good humour, and no ill effects followed.

All the while, until Monkhouse succeeded, we could hear Lamb struggling in the painting-room and calling at intervals, "Who is that fellow? Allow me to see his organs once more."

It is not difficult to guess how Carlyle or Macready would have commented on this scene, had they been present.

But the Wednesday evenings when Charles and Mary Lamb kept open house—if the term could be applied to the slender resources of the garret in Inner Temple Lane—produced something better in the way of intellectual result than the above. Talfourd and Procter have told us the names and qualities of the guests who gathered about the Lambs on these occasions, and the homely fare and the cordial greeting that awaited them—the low, dingy rooms, with books and prints for their chief furniture, the two tables set out for whist, and the cold beef and can of porter on the sideboard, to which each guest helped himself as he chose. On these occasions would be found Wordsworth and Coleridge when in town, and then the company resolved themselves willingly into a band of contented listeners; but at other times no difference of rank would be recognized, and poets and critics, painters, journalists, barristers, men in public offices, dramatists, and actors met on terms of unchallenged equality. Hazlitt has made an attempt, in a well-known essay, to reproduce

an actual conversation at which he was present on one of these Wednesdays. He admits that, writing twenty years after the event, memory was ill able to recall the actual words of the speakers. But even when allowance is made for the lapse of time, it is hard to believe that Hazlitt had much of the Boswellian faculty. The subject that had been discussed was "Persons one would wish to have seen." Isaac Newton and Locke, Shakespeare and Milton, and many others were suggested, and all dismissed for one reason or another by Lamb. Sir Thomas Browne and Fulke Greville were two he substituted for these. But it is impossible to accept the following sentence as a sample of Lamb's conversational manner. "When I look at that obscure but gorgeous prose composition, the *Urn Burial*, I seem to myself to look into a deep abyss, at the bottom of which are hid pearls and rich treasure; or, it is like a stately labyrinth of doubt and withering speculation, and I would invoke the spirit of the author to lead me through it." This style is equally unlike that of essay and letter, and nothing so pointless and so grandiose, we are sure, ever proceeded from his lips. It was not so that Lamb, as Haydon expressed it, "stuttered out his quaintness in snatches, like the Fool in *Lear*." But we can distinguish that stammering tongue, if we listen, above the din of the supper party and the whist-table—(*not* rigorous as Mrs. Battle's)—ranging from the maddest drollery to the subtlest criticism, calling out to Martin Burney, "Martin, if dirt were trumps, what a hand you'd have,"—or declaring that he had once known a young man who "wanted to be a tailor, but hadn't the spirit,"—or pronouncing, *à propos* of the water-cure, that it was neither new nor wonderful, for that it was at least as old as the Flood, when, "in *his* opinion," it killed more than

it cured. We can hear him drawing some sound distinction, as between the ingrained jealousy of Leontes and the mere credulity of Othello, or contrasting the noble simplicity of the *Nut-Brown Maid* with Prior's vapid paraphrase, in *Henry and Emma*. We can listen to him as he fearlessly decried all his friends' idols of the hour, Byron or Shelley or Goethe, and raved with something of a perverse enthusiasm over some forgotten worthy of the sixteenth century. We can hear him pleading for the "divine compliments" of Pope, and repeating with a faltering voice, the well-known lines—

> Happy my studies, when by these approved!
> Happier their author, when by these beloved!
> From these the world will judge of men and books
> Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cookes.

It was this range of sympathy, yet coupled with such strange limitations—this alternation of tenderness and frolic—of scholarly fulness and luminous insight, that drew the poet and the critic, as well as the boon companion, to Lamb's Wednesday nights.

Lamb's letters at this time afford excellent specimens of his drollery and high animal spirits. The following was addressed to Manning early in 1810. Manning was then in China.

DEAR MANNING.—When I last wrote you I was in lodgings. I am now in chambers, No. 4, Inner Temple Lane, where I should be happy to see you any evening. Bring any of your friends, the mandarins, with you. I have two sitting-rooms; I call them so *par excellence*, for you may stand, or loll, or lean, or try any posture in them, but they are best for sitting; not squatting down Japanese fashion, but the more decorous mode which European usage has consecrated. I have two of these

rooms on the third floor, and five sleeping, cooking, &c., rooms on the fourth floor. In my best room is a choice collection of the works of Hogarth, an English painter of some humour. In my next best are shelves, containing a small but well-chosen library. My best room commands a court in which there are trees and a pump, the water of which is excellent cold, with brandy, and not very insipid without. Here I hope to set up my rest, and not quit till Mr. Powell, the undertaker, gives me notice that I may have possession of my last lodging. He lets lodgings for single gentlemen. I sent you a parcel of books by my last, to give you some idea of the state of European literature. There comes with this two volumes, done up as letters, of minor poetry, a sequel to *Mrs. Leicester;* the best you may suppose mine; the next best are my coadjutor's; you may amuse yourself in guessing them out; but I must tell you mine are but one-third in quantity of the whole. So much for a very delicate subject. It is hard to speak of one's own self, &c. Holcroft had finished his life when I wrote to you, and Hazlitt has since finished his life; I do not mean his own life, but he has finished a life of Holcroft, which is going to press. Tuthill is Dr. Tuthill; I continue Mr. Lamb. I have published a little book for children on titles of honour; and to give them some idea of the difference of rank and gradual rising I have made a little scale, supposing myself to receive the following various accessions of dignity from the king, who is the fountain of honour. As at first, 1, Mr. C. Lamb; 2, C. Lamb, Esq.; 3, Sir C. Lamb, Bart.; 4, Baron Lamb of Stamford[1]; 5, Viscount Lamb; 6, Earl Lamb; 7, Marquis Lamb; 8, Duke Lamb. It would look like quibbling to carry it on further, and especially as it is not necessary for children to go beyond the ordinary titles of sub-regal dignity in our own country; otherwise, I have sometimes in my dreams imagined myself still advancing—as 9th, King Lamb; 10th, Emperor Lamb; 11th, Pope Innocent, higher than which is nothing. Puns I have not made many (nor punch much) since

[1] Where my family came from. I have chosen that, if ever I should have my choice.

the date of my last; one I cannot help relating. A constable in Salisbury Cathedral was telling me that eight people dined at the top of the spire of the cathedral, upon which I remarked that they must be very sharp set. But in general, I cultivate the reasoning part of my mind more than the imaginative. I am stuffed out so with eating turkey for dinner and another turkey for supper yesterday (Turkey in Europe and Turkey in Asia), that I can't jog on. It is New Year here. That is, it was New Year half a year back when I was writing this. Nothing puzzles me more than time and space, and yet nothing puzzles me less, for I never think about them. The Persian ambassador is the principal thing talked of now. I sent some people to see him worship the sun on Primrose Hill, at half-past six in the morning, 28th November; but he did not come, which makes me think the old fire-worshippers are a sect almost extinct in Persia. The Persian ambassador's name is Shaw Ali Mirza. The common people call him Shaw nonsense. While I think of it, I have put three letters besides my own three into the India post for you, from your brother, sister, and some gentleman whose name I forget. Will they, have they, did they come safe? The distance you are at cuts up tenses by the root. I think you said you did not know Kate *********. I express her by nine stars, though she is but one. You must have seen her at her father's. Try and remember her. Coleridge is bringing out a paper in weekly numbers, called the *Friend*, which I would send if I could; but the difficulty I had in getting the packets of books out to you before deters me; and you'll want something new to read when you come home. Except Kate, I have had no vision of excellence this year, and she passed by like the queen on her coronation day; you don't know whether you saw her or not. Kate is fifteen; I go about moping, and sing the old pathetic ballad I used to like in my youth—

> She's sweet fifteen,
> I'm *one year more.*

Mrs. Bland sang it in boy's clothes the first time I heard it. I

sometimes think the lower notes in my voice are like Mrs. Bland's. That glorious singer, Braham, one of my lights, is fled. He was for a season. He was a rare composition of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel; yet all these elements mixed up so kindly in him that you could not tell which preponderated; but he is gone, and one Phillips is engaged instead. Kate is vanished, but Miss B—— is always to be met with!

> Queens drop away, while blue-legged maukin thrives,
> And courtly Mildred dies while country Madge survives.

That is not my poetry, but Quarles'; but haven't you observed that the rarest things are the least obvious? Don't show anybody the names in this letter. I write confidentially, and wish this letter to be considered as *private*. Hazlitt has written a *grammar* for Godwin; Godwin sells it bound up with a treatise of his own on language, but the *grey mare is the better horse*. I don't allude to Mrs. ——, but to the word grammar, which comes near to *grey mare*, if you observe, in sound. That figure is called paranomasia in Greek. I am sometimes happy in it. An old woman begged of me for charity. "Ah! sir," said she, "I have seen better days." "So have I, good woman," I replied; but I meant literally, days not so rainy and overcast as that on which she begged; she meant more prosperous days. Mr. Dawe is made Associate of the Royal Academy. By what law of association I can't guess.

The humour of this letter—and there are many as good—is not the humour of the *Essays of Elia*. It is not charged with thought like them, nor does it reach the same depths of feeling. But it is the humour of a man of genius. The inventiveness of it all; the simplicity with which the most daring flights of fancy are hazarded; the amazing improbability of the assertion that it was the "common people" who called the ambassador "Shaw nonsense;" the gravity with which it is set down that it is not necessary *in England* to teach children the degrees

of rank beyond royalty,—all this is delightful in the extreme, and the power to enjoy it may be taken as a test of the reader's capacity for understanding Lamb's place as a humorist.

The eight years spent in Inner Temple Lane were, in Talfourd's judgment, the happiest of Lamb's life. His income was steadily rising, and he no longer had to bear the pressure of inconvenient poverty. Friends of a higher order than the "friendly harpies" he has told us of, who came about him for his suppers, and the brandy-and-water afterwards, were gradually gathering round him. Hazlitt, and Crabb Robinson, and Procter, and Talfourd were men of tastes and capacities akin to his own. The period was not a fertile one in literary production. The little collection of stories for children, called *Mrs. Leicester's School*, written jointly with his sister, and the volume of *Poetry for Children*, also a joint production, constitute—with one notable exception—the whole of Lamb's literary labours during this time. The exception named is the contribution to Leigh Hunt's periodical, the *Reflector*, of two or three masterly pieces of criticism, which may be more conveniently noticed later in this memoir.

Meantime the cloud of domestic anxiety was still unlifted. Mary Lamb's illnesses were frequent and embarrassing. An extract from a letter to Miss Hutchinson, Mrs. Wordsworth's sister (October, 1815), tells once more the often-told tale, and shows the unaltered patience and seriousness of her brother's faithful guardianship. The passage has a further interest in the picture it incidentally draws of the happier days of the brother and sister:—"I am forced to be the replier to your letter, for Mary has been ill, and gone from home these five weeks yesterday. She has left me very lonely and very miserable. I stroll

abont, but there is no rest but at one's own fireside, and there is no rest for me there now. I look forward to the worse half being past, and keep up as well as I can. She has begun to show some favourable symptoms. The return of her disorder has been frightfully soon this time, with scarce a six months' interval. I am almost afraid my worry of spirits about the East India House was partly the cause of her illness, but one always imputes it to the cause next at hand; more probably it comes from some cause we have no control over or conjecture of. It cuts great slices out of the time, the little time, we shall have to live together. I don't know but the recurrence of these illnesses might help me to sustain her death better than if we had no partial separations. But I won't talk of death. I will imagine us immortal, or forget that we are otherwise. By God's blessing, in a few weeks we may be making our meal together, or sitting in the front row of the Pit at Drury Lane, or taking our evening walk past the theatres, to look at the outside of them, at least, if not to be tempted in. Then we forget that we are assailable; we are strong for the time as rocks;—'the wind is tempered to the shorn Lambs.'"

CHAPTER VI.

RUSSELL STREET, COVENT GARDEN—THE ESSAYS OF ELIA.

(1817—1823.)

In the autumn of 1817, Lamb and his sister left the Temple, their home for seventeen years, for lodgings in Great Russell Street, Covent Garden, the corner of Bow Street, and the site where Will's Coffee-House once stood. "Here we are," Lamb writes to Miss Wordsworth in November of this year, "transplanted from our native soil. I thought we never could have been torn up from the Temple. Indeed it was an ugly wrench, but like a tooth, now 'tis out, and I am easy. We never can strike root so deep in any other ground. This, where we are, is a light bit of gardener's mould, and if they take us up from it, it will cost no blood and groans, like mandrakes pulled up. We are in the individual spot I like best in all this great city. The theatres with all their noises; Covent Garden, dearer to me than any gardens of Alcinous, where we are morally sure of the earliest peas and 'sparagus. Bow Street, where the thieves are examined within a few yards of us. Mary had not been here four-and-twenty hours before she saw a thief. She sits at the window working; and casually throwing out her eyes, she sees a concourse of people coming this way, with a con-

stable to conduct the solemnity. These little incidents agreeably diversify a female life."

During the seventeen years in the Temple, Lamb's worldly fortunes had improved. His salary from the India House was increasing every year, and he was beginning to add to his income by authorship. He was already known as critic and essayist to an appreciative few. Friends were gathering round him, and acquaintances who enjoyed his conversation and his weekly suppers (Wednesday evening was open house in the Temple days) were increasing in rather an embarrassing degree. Ever since he had had a house of his own, he had suffered from the intrusion of such troublesome visitors. A too easy good-nature on his part may have been to blame for this. He took often, as he confesses, a perverse pleasure in noticing and befriending those whom others, with good reason, looked shyly on, and as time went on he began to find very little of his leisure time that he could call his own. It may have been with some hope of beginning a freer life on new soil that he resolved to tear himself from his beloved Temple. If so he was not successful. A remarkable letter to Mrs. Wordsworth, a few months only after his removal to Russell Street, tells the same old story of well-meaning intruders. "The reason why I cannot write letters at home is that I am never alone." "Except my morning's walk to the office, which is like treading on sands of gold for that reason, I am never so. I cannot walk home from office, but some officious friend offers his unwelcome courtesies to accompany me. All the morning I am pestered. Evening company I should always like, had I any mornings, but I am saturated with human faces (*divine* forsooth), and voices all the golden morning; and five evenings in a week would be as much as I should

covet to be in company, but I assure you that it is a wonderful week in which I can get two, or one to myself. I am never C. L. but always C. L. & Co. He, who thought it not good for man to be alone, preserve me from the more prodigious monstrosity of being never by myself." "All I mean is that I am a little over-companied, but not that I have any animosity against the good creatures that are so anxious to drive away the harpy solitude from me. I like 'em, and cards, and a cheerful glass; but I mean merely to give you an idea between office confinement and after-office society, how little time I can call my own." It is not difficult to form an idea from this frank disclosure, of the hindrances and the snares that beset Lamb's comfort and acted harmfully on his temper and habits. It was fortunate for him that at this juncture he should have been led to discover where his powers as a writer indisputably lay, and to find the exact opportunity for their exercise.

In this same year, 1818, a young bookseller, Charles Ollier, whose acquaintance he had recently made, proposed to him to bring out a complete collection of his scattered writings. Some of these, *John Woodvil* and *Rosamond Gray*, had been published separately in former years, and were now out of print. Others were interred among extinct magazines and journals, and these were by far the most worthy of preservation. The edition appeared in the year 1818, in two handsome volumes. It contained, besides *John Woodvil* and *Rosamond Gray*, and a fair quantity of verse (including the *Farewell to Tobacco*), the *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, the essay on *The Tragedies of Shakespeare, considered with reference to their fitness for stage representation*, and that on *The Genius and Character of Hogarth*, these two last having originally appeared in

Leigh Hunt's magazine, the *Reflector*. The edition was prefaced by a dedicatory letter to Coleridge. "You will smile," wrote Lamb, "to see the slender labours of your friend designated by the title of *Works*; but such was the wish of the gentlemen who have kindly undertaken the trouble of collecting them, and from their judgment there could be no appeal." He goes on pleasantly to recall to his old schoolfellow how, in company with their friend Lloyd, they had so many years before tried their poetical fortune. "You will find your old associate," he adds, "in his second volume, dwindled into prose and *criticism*." Lamb must have felt, as he wrote the word, that "dwindled" was hardly the fitting term. He had written nothing as yet so noble in matter and in style, nothing so worthy to live, as the analysis of the characters of Hamlet and Lear in the essay on *Shakespeare's Tragedies*. Lamb's high rank, as essayist and critic, must have been put beyond dispute by the publication under his own name of his collected *Works*. He was already well known and appreciated by some of the finest minds of his day. He now addressed a wider public, and the edition of 1818 gave him a status he had not before enjoyed. And yet at this date, various as were the contents of the two volumes, he had not found the opportunity that was to call forth his special faculty.

The opportunity was, however, at hand. In January 1820, Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, the publishers, brought out the first number of a new monthly journal, reviving in it the name of an earlier, and extinct periodical, the *London Magazine*. The editor they chose was John Scott, a competent critic and journalist who had formerly edited the *Champion* newspaper. The aim of this new venture, as set forth in the opening prospectus, was to be of a higher and more intellectual class than its many popular contem-

poraries. It was to be a journal of criticism and the *Belles Lettres*, including original poetry, and yet to contain in a monthly appendix such statistics of trade and general home and foreign intelligence as would make it useful to those of a less literary turn. The magazine had an existence of five years, undergoing many changes of fortune, and passing in that time through many hands. Its first editor, Mr. Scott, was killed in a duel in the summer of 1821, and its first publishers parted with it to Taylor and Hessey. At no period of its career does it seem to have been a marked commercial success. Either capital was wanted, or management was unsatisfactory, for the list of contributors during these five years was remarkable. Mr. Procter and Hood have discoursed pleasantly on their various fellow-contributors to the magazine, and the social gatherings held once a month by Taylor and Hessey (who employed no editor) at the office in Waterloo Place. Hazlitt, Allan Cunningham, Cary (the translator of Dante), John Hamilton Reynolds, George Darley, Keats, James Montgomery, Sir John Bowring, Hartley Coleridge, were regular or occasional contributors. Carlyle published his *Life and Writings of Schiller* in the later volumes, and De Quincey (besides other papers) his *Opium Eater*.

Talfourd thinks that Lamb owed to his intimacy with Hazlitt his introduction to the managers of the *London*. He was not on the staff from the beginning. The first number was issued in January 1820, and Lamb's first contribution was in the August following. In the number for that month appeared an article, with the not very attractive title, *Recollections of the South-Sea House*. As to its authorship there was no indication except the signature at the end—"Elia." Lamb has himself told us

the origin of this immortal *nom de plume*. When he had written his first essay, wishing to remain anonymous, and yet wanting a convenient mark for identification in articles to come, he bethought him of an Italian of the name of Elia, who had been fellow-clerk with him thirty years before, during the few months that he had been employed as a boy in the South-Sea House. As a practical joke (Lamb confesses) he borrowed his old friend's name, hoping to make his excuses when they should next meet. "I went the other day," writes Lamb in June 1821, "(not having seen him for a year) to laugh over with him at my usurpation of his name, and found him, alas! no more than a name, for he died of consumption eleven months ago, and I knew not of it. So the name has fairly devolved to me, I think, and 'tis all he has left me." Lamb continued to use it for his contributions to the *London* and other periodicals for many years. It is doubtful if the name has ever been generally pronounced as Lamb intended. "Call him Ellia," he wrote to his publisher, Mr. Taylor, but the world has taken more kindly to the broad e and the single l.

When the first series of the *Essays of Elia* appeared in a collected form in 1823, it consisted of some five-and-twenty essays, contributed at the rate of one a month (occasionally two) with scarcely an intermission between August, 1820, and December, 1822. It would seem as if no conditions had been imposed upon Lamb by the editor as to the subject-matter of his essays. He was allowed to roam at his own free will over the experiences of his life, and to reproduce them in any form, and with any discursiveness into which he might be allured on the way. The matter of the essays proved to be largely personal, or at least to savour of the autobiographical. The first essay

already referred to professed to be a recollection of the South-Sea House as it existed thirty years before, with sketches of several of the clerks who had been Lamb's contemporaries. As, however, he was a boy of fifteen at the time he entered, and moreover was at most two years in the office, it is probable that he owed much of the knowledge exhibited in the paper to his elder brother John, who remained in the office long after Charles had left it. Lamb was in the habit of spending his short summer holiday in one or other of the two great University towns, and his second essay was an account of *Oxford in the Vacation*. The third in order of appearance was an account of Christ's Hospital, on that side of it which had *not* been touched in his earlier paper on the same subject. The fourth was a discursive meditation on the *Two Races of Men*, by which Lamb meant those who borrow and those who lend, which he illustrated by the example of one Ralph Bigod (whom he had known in his journalist days on the *Albion*), and Coleridge, who so freely borrowed from Lamb's library, and so bountifully returned the loan with interest in the shape of marginal annotations. In the essay, *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist*, he describes an old lady, a relative of the Plumer family, whom he had known in person, or by repute, at the old mansion in Hertfordshire. In the chapter *On Ears*, his own want of musical ear, and the kind of impressions from musical sounds to which he was susceptible, is the subject of his confidences. In *My Relations*, and *Mackery End in Hertfordshire* he draws portraits, under the disguise of two cousins, James and Bridget Elia, of his brother John and his sister Mary. *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple* comprises all that he remembered of his boyhood spent in the Temple, with particulars of the

more notable Masters of the Bench of that day, obtained no doubt from his father, the Lovel of the essay, and his father's old and loyal friend Randal Norris, the sub-treasurer of the Inner Temple. Other essays, such as that *On Chimney Sweepers*, and *The Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis*, contain the results of that observing eye with which he had daily surveyed the streets of his beloved city for so many years, "looking no one in the face for more than a moment," as Mr. Procter has told us, yet "contriving to see everything as he went on."

The opening essay on the *South-Sea House* shows that there was no need to feel his way, either in matter or style. He began in the fulness of his observation, and with a style already formed, and adapting itself to all changes of thought and feeling. His description of John Tipp, the accountant, was enough to show that not only a keen observer, but a master of English was at work :—

> At the desk, Tipp was quite another sort of creature. Thence all ideas that were purely ornamental were banished. You could not speak of anything romantic without rebuke. Politics were excluded. A newspaper was thought too refined and abstracted. The whole duty of man consisted in writing off dividend warrants. The striking of the annual balance in the company's books (which perhaps differed from the balance of last year in the sum of 25*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.*) occupied his days and nights for a month previous. Not that Tipp was blind to the deadness of *things* (as they call them in the city) in his beloved house, or did not sigh for a return of the old stirring days when South-Sea hopes were young (he was indeed equal to the wielding of any the most intricate accounts of the most flourishing company in these or those days): but to a genuine accountant the difference of proceeds is as nothing. The fractional farthing is as dear to his heart as the thousands which stand before it. He is the true actor who, whether his part be a prince or a peasant, must

act it with like intensity. With Tipp, form was everything. His life was formal. His actions seemed ruled with a ruler. His pen was not less erring than his heart. He made the best executor in the world; he was plagued with incessant executorships accordingly, which excited his spleen and soothed his vanity in equal ratios. He would swear (for Tipp swore) at the little orphans, whose rights he would guard with a tenacity like the grasp of the dying hand that commended their interests to his protection. With all this there was about him a sort of timidity—his few enemies used to give it a worse name—a something which, in reverence to the dead, we will place, if you please, a little on this side of the heroic. Nature certainly had been pleased to endow John Tipp with a sufficient measure of the principle of self-preservation. There is a cowardice which we do not despise, because it has nothing base or treacherous in its elements; it betrays itself, not you; it is mere temperament; the absence of the romantic and the enterprising; it sees a lion in the way, and will not, with Fortinbras, "greatly find quarrel in a straw," when some supposed honour is at stake. Tipp never mounted the box of a stage coach in his life, or leaned against the rails of a balcony, or walked upon the ridge of a parapet, or looked down a precipice, or let off a gun, or went upon a water-party, or would willingly let you go if he could have helped it; neither was it recorded of him that for lucre, or for intimidation, he ever forsook friend or principle.

Two of the essays have attained a celebrity, certainly not out of proportion to their merits, but serving to make quotation from them almost an impertinence. These are the *Dissertation on Roast Pig*, Lamb's version of a story told him by his friend Manning (though *not* probably to be found in any Chinese manuscript), and the essay, finally called *Imperfect Sympathies*, but originally bearing the cumbrous title of *Jews, Quakers, Scotchmen, and other Imperfect Sympathies*. It is here that occurs the famous analysis of the Scotch character, perhaps the cleverest

passage, in its union of fine observation and felicity of phrase, in the whole of Lamb's writings. The anecdote of Lamb's favourite picture, – his "beauty,"—the Lionardo da Vinci, and that of the party where the son of Burns was expected, together with the complaint that follows of the hopelessness of satisfying a Scotchman in the matter of the appreciation of that poet, have become as much commonplaces of quotation as Sydney Smith's famous reference to the surgical operation. The brilliancy of the whole passage has rather thrown into the shade the disquisition on Quaker manners that follows, and the story he had heard from Carlisle, the surgeon, of the three Quakers who "stopped to bait" at Andover. But the whole paper is excellent.

Hardly less familiar is the account of old Mrs. Battle, and her opinions upon the game of whist. "'A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game.' This was the celebrated wish of old Sarah Battle (now with God) who next to her devotions loved a good game at whist. She was none of your lukewarm gamesters, your half and half players, who have no objection to take a hand if you want one to make up a rubber; who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning, that they like to win one game and lose another, that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card-table, but are indifferent whether they play or no, and will desire an adversary who has slipped a wrong card to take it up and play another. These insufferable trifiers are the curse of a table; one of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing with them."

The portrait must have been drawn in the main from life. One of the most singular suggestions ever offered by Lamb's editors is that this "gentlewoman born," with her

"fine last-century countenance," the niece of "old Walter Plumer," was drawn from Lamb's old grandmother, Mrs. Field. As a test of the likelihood of this theory it will be found instructive to read, after this essay, the touching lines already cited called *The Grandame*.

The marked peculiarities of Lamb's style give so unique a colouring to all these essays that one is apt to overlook to what a variety of themes it is found suitable. There is no mood, from that of almost reckless merriment to that of pathetic sweetness or religious awe, to which the style is not able to modulate with no felt sense of incongruity. A feature of Lamb's method, as we have seen, is his use of quotations. Not only are they brought in so as really to illustrate, but the passages cited themselves receive illustration from the use made of them, and gain a permanent and heightened value from it. Whether it be a garden-scene from Marvell, a solemn paradox from Sir Thomas Browne, or a stanza from some then recent poem of Wordsworth, the quotation fulfils a double purpose, and has sent many a reader to explore for himself in the author whose words strike him with such luminous effect in their new setting. Take, for example, the Miltonic digression in the essay on *Grace before Meat*. Lamb is never more happy than in quoting from or discoursing on Milton:—

The severest satire upon full tables and surfeits is the banquet which Satan, in the *Paradise Regained*, provides for a temptation in the wilderness:—

> A table richly spread in regal modes
> With dishes piled and meats of noblest sort
> And savour; beasts of chase, or fowl of game,
> In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled
> Gris-amber-steamed; all fish from sea or shore,
> Freshet or purling brook, for which was drained
> Pontus, and Lucrine bay, and Afric coast.

The tempter, I warrant you, thought these cates would go down without the recommendatory preface of a benediction. They are like to be short graces where the devil plays the host. I am afraid the poet wants his usual decorum in this place. Was he thinking of the old Roman luxury, or of a gaudy day at Cambridge? This was a temptation fitter for a Heliogabalus. The whole banquet is too civic and culinary; and the accompaniments altogether a profanation of that deep, abstracted, holy scene. The mighty artillery of sauces which the cook-fiend conjures up, is out of proportion to the simple wants and plain hunger of the guest. He that disturbed him in his dreams, from his dreams might have been taught better. To the temperate fantasies of the famished Son of God what sort of feasts presented themselves? He dreamed indeed—

> As appetite is wont to dream
> Of meats and drinks, nature's refreshment sweet.

But what meats?

> Him thought, he by the brook of Cherith stood,
> And saw the ravens with their horny beaks
> Food to Elijah bringing even and morn:
> Though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought.
> He saw the prophet also how he fled
> Into the desert, and how there he slept
> Under a juniper: then how awaked
> He found his supper on the coals prepared,
> And by the angel was bid rise and eat,
> And ate the second time after repose,
> The strength whereof sufficed him forty days:
> Sometimes, that with Elijah he partook
> Or as a guest with Daniel at his pulse.

Nothing in Milton is finelier fancied than these temperate dreams of the divine Hungerer. To which of these two visionary banquets, think you, would the introduction of what is called the grace have been most fitting and pertinent?

"I am no Quaker at my food." So Lamb characteristically proceeds, after one short paragraph interposed

"I confess I am not indifferent to the kinds of it. Those unctuous morsels of deer's flesh were not made to be received with dispassionate services. I hate a man who swallows it, affecting not to know what he is eating; I suspect his taste in higher matters. I shrink instinctively from one who professes to like minced veal. There is a physiognomical character in the tastes for food. C—— holds that a man cannot have a pure mind who refuses apple-dumplings. I am not certain but he is right."

And so he rambles on in almost endless digression and absolute fearlessness as to egotism of such a kind ever palling or annoying. This egotism—it is almost superfluous to mark—is a dominant characteristic of Lamb's manner. The prominence of the personal element had indeed been a feature of the essay proper ever since Montaigne, its first inventor. But Lamb's use of the "I" has little resemblance to the gossiping confessions of the Gascon gentleman. These grave avowals as to the minced veal and the dumplings are not of the same order as Montaigne's confidences as to his preference of white wine to red. The "I" of Lamb in such a case is no concession to an idle curiosity, nor is it in fact biographical at all. Nor is it the egotism of Steele and Addison, though, when occasion arises, Lamb shows signs of the influence upon him of these earlier masters in his own special school. He thus begins, for instance, his paper called *The Wedding*:—

"I do not know when I have been better pleased than at being invited last week to be present at the wedding of a friend's daughter. I like to make one at these ceremonies, which to us old people give back our youth in a manner, and restore our gayest season, in the remembrance of our own success, or the regrets scarcely less tender, of our own youthful disappointments, in this point of a settlement.

On these occasions I am sure to be in good-humour for a week or two after, and enjoy a reflected honeymoon." In matter, language, and cadence, this might have been taken bodily from the *Spectator*. Yet this was no freak of imitation on Lamb's part. It merely arose from the subject and the train of thought engendered by it being of that domestic kind which Richard Steele loved so well to discourse on. Lamb's mind and memory were so stored with English reading of an older date, that the occurrence of a particular theme sends him back, quite naturally, to those early masters who had specially made that theme their own. For all his strongly-marked individuality of manner, there are perhaps few English writers who have written so differently upon different themes. When he chose to be fanciful, he could be as euphuistic as Donne or Burton—when he was led to be grave and didactic, he could write with the sententiousness of Bacon,—when his imagination and feeling together lifted him above thoughts of style, his English cleared and soared into regions not far below the noblest flights of Milton and Jeremy Taylor. When on the other hand he was at home, on homely themes, he wrote "like a man of this world," and of his own century and year.

Still it must be said that his style is in the main an eclectic English. It is needless to add that this implies no affectation. No man ever wrote to such purpose in a style deliberately assumed. Hazlitt remarks of him, that "he is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his authors, that the idea of imitation is almost done way. There is an inward unction, a marrowy vein both in the thought and feeling, an intuition, deep and lively, of his subject that carries off any quaintness or awkwardness arising from an antiquated style and dress." This is quite true,

and Hazlitt might have added that in the rare instances when Lamb used this old fashioned manner, without the deeper thought or finer observation to elevate it, the manner alone, whimsical and ingenious as it is, becomes a trifle wearisome. The euphuistic ingenuity of *All Fools' Day* is not a pleasing sample of Lamb's faculty.

His friend Bernard Barton wrote of him in a sonnet,

> From the olden time
> Of authorship, thy patent should be dated,
> And thou with Marvell, Browne, and Burton, mated.

This trio of authors is well chosen. There is no poet he loves better to quote than Marvell, and none with whose poetic vein his own is more in sympathy. Lamb received his impressions from nature (unless it was in Hertfordshire) largely through the medium of books, and he makes it clear that old-fashioned garden-scenes come to him first with their peculiar charm when he meets with them in Milton or Marvell. But the second name cited by Barton is the most important of all among the influences on Lamb's style and the cast of his thought. Of all old writers, the author of the *Urn Burial* and the *Religio Medici* appears oftenest, in quotation or allusion, in the *Essays of Elia*. Lamb somewhere boasts that he first "among the moderns" discovered and proclaimed his excellences. And though Lamb never (so far as I can discover) caught the special rhythm of Browne's sentences, it is from him that he adopted the constant habit just referred to, of asserting his opinions, feelings, and speculations in the first person. Different as are the two men in other regards, Lamb's egotism is largely the egotism of Sir Thomas Browne. From Browne too he probably caught a certain habit of gloomy paradox, in dwelling on

the mysteries of the supernatural world. His sombre musings upon death in the essay called *New Year's Eve* bear the strong impress of Browne, notwithstanding that they are antagonistic (perhaps consciously) to a remarkable passage in the *Religio Medici*. And even in his lighter vein of speculation, Lamb's persistent use of the first person often reads as if he were humorously parodying the same original.

A large portion of Lamb's history is related in these essays, and with the addition of a few names and dates, a complete biography might be constructed from them alone. As we have seen, he tells of his childish thoughts and feelings, of his school-days, his home in the Temple, the Hertfordshire village where he passed his holidays as a boy, and the University towns where he loved to spend them in manhood. He has drawn most detailed portraits of his grandmother, his father, sister, and brother, and would no doubt have added that of his mother, but for the painful memories it would have brought to Mary. Of the incidents in the happier days of his life, when Mary was in good health, and the daily sharer in all interests and pleasures, he has written with a special charm. There is a passage in the essay called *Old China* without which any picture of their united life would be incomplete. The essay had begun by declaring Lamb's partiality for old china, from which after a few paragraphs he diverges, by a modulation common with him, to the recollection of his past struggles. He had been taking tea, he says, with his cousin (under this relationship his sister Mary is always indicated), using a new set of china, and remarking to her on their better fortunes which enabled them to indulge now and again in the luxury of such a purchase, "when a passing sentiment seemed to overshade

the brows of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.

"I wish the good old times would come again," she said, "when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor, but there was a middle state," so she was pleased to ramble on, "in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those days!) we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

"Do you remember the brown suit which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare, and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller, with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards), lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures, and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome, and when you presented it to me, and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating*, you called it), and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be

left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical, give you half the honest vanity with which you flaunted it about in that over-worn suit—your old corbeau—for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen or sixteen shillings, was it?—a great affair we thought it then—which you had lavished on the old folio? Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now."

The essay "Blakesmoor in H——shire" has been more than once referred to, in connexion with Lamb's old grandmother, Mrs. Field. The essay acquires a new interest when it is known how much of fact is contained in it. William Plumer, who represented his county in parliament for so many years, and was at the time of his death in 1822, member for Higham Ferrers, left his estates at Gilston and Blakesware to his widow, apparently with the understanding that the old Blakesware mansion should be pulled down. Accordingly not long before the date of Lamb's essay (September, 1824) it had been levelled to the ground; and some of the more valuable of its contents, including the busts of the Twelve Cæsars, so often dwelt on by Lamb in letter or essay, removed to the other house at Gilston. Under its roof, and among its gardens and terraces, Lamb's happiest days as a child had been spent, and he had just been to look once more on the few vestiges still remaining:—

> I do not know a pleasure more affecting than to range at will over the deserted apartments of some fine old family mansion.

The traces of extinct grandeur admit of a better passion than envy; and contemplations on the great and good, whom we fancy in succession to have been its inhabitants, weave for us illusions incompatible with the bustle of modern occupancy, and vanities of foolish present aristocracy. The same difference of feeling, I think, attends us between entering an empty and a crowded church. In the latter it is chance but some present human frailty—an act of inattention on the part of some of the auditory, or a trait of affectation, or worse, vainglory, on that of the preacher—puts us by our best thoughts, disharmonizing the place and the occasion. But would'st thou know the beauty of holiness? Go alone on some weekday, borrowing the keys of good Master Sexton, traverse the cool aisles of some country church; think of the piety that has kneeled there—the congregations, old and young, that have found consolation there—the meek pastor, the docile parishioner. With no disturbing emotions, no cross, conflicting comparisons, drink in the tranquillity of the place, till thou thyself become as fixed and motionless as the marble effigies that kneel and weep around thee.

Journeying northward lately, I could not resist going some few miles out of my road to look upon the remains of an old great house with which I had been impressed in this way in infancy. I was apprised that the owner of it had lately pulled it down; still I had a vague notion that it could not all have perished, that so much solidity with magnificence could not have been crushed all at once into the mere dust and rubbish which I found it.

The work of ruin had proceeded with a swift hand indeed, and the demolition of a few weeks had reduced it to an antiquity.

I was astonished at the indistinction of everything. Where had stood the great gates? What bounded the courtyard? Whereabout did the outhouses commence? A few bricks only lay as representatives of that which was so stately and so spacious.

Death does not shrink up his human victim at this rate. The burnt ashes of a man weigh more in their proportion.

Had I seen these brick and mortar knaves at their process of destruction, at the plucking of every panel I should have felt the varlets at my heart. I should have cried out to them to spare a plank at least out of the cheerful store-room, in whose hot window-seat I used to sit and read Cowley, with the grass-plot before, and the hum and flappings of that one solitary wasp that ever haunted it about me—it is in mine ears now, as oft as summer returns; or a panel of the yellow room.

Why, every plank and panel of that house for me had magic in it. The tapestried bedrooms—tapestry so much better than painting—not adorning merely—but peopling the wainscots—at which childhood ever and anon would steal a look, shifting its coverlid (replaced as quickly) to exercise its tender courage in a momentary eye-encounter with those stern bright visages, staring reciprocally—all Ovid on the walls—in colours vivider than his descriptions. Actæon in mid sprout, with the unappeasable prudery of Diana; and the still more provoking and almost culinary coolness of Dan Phœbus, eel-fashion, deliberately divesting of Marsyas.

Then that haunted room—in which old Mrs. Battle died—whereinto I have crept, but always in the daytime, with a passion of fear; and a sneaking curiosity, terror-tainted, to hold communication with the past.—*How shall they build it up again?*

It was an old deserted place, yet not so long deserted but that traces of the splendour of past inmates were everywhere apparent. Its furniture was still standing, even to the tarnished gilt-leather battledores and crumbling feathers of shuttlecocks in the nursery, which told that children had once played there. But I was a lonely child, and had the range at will of every apartment, knew every nook and corner, wondered and worshipped everywhere. The solitude of childhood is not so much the mother of thought, as it is the feeder of love, and silence, and admiration. So strange a passion for the place possessed me in those years, that though there lay—I shame to say how few roods distant from the mansion—half hid by trees, what I judged some romantic lake, such was the spell which bound me to the house, and such my carefulness not to pass its strict and

proper precincts, that the idle waters lay unexplored for me; and not till late in life, curiosity prevailing over elder devotion, I found, to my astonishment, a pretty brawling brook had been the Lacus Incognitus of my infancy. Variegated views, extensive prospects—and those at no great distance from the house—I was told of such—what were they to me, being out of the boundaries of my Eden? So far from a wish to roam, I would have drawn, methought, still closer the fences of my chosen prison; and have been hemmed in by a yet securer cincture of those excluding garden walls. I could have exclaimed with that garden-loving poet—

> Bind me, ye woodbines, in your twines;
> Curl me about, ye gadding vines;
> And oh so close your circles lace,
> That I may never leave this place:
> But lest your fetters prove too weak,
> Ere I your silken bondage break,
> Do you, O brambles, chain me too,
> And, courteous briars, nail me through.[1]

I was here as in a lonely temple. Snug firesides, the low-built roof, parlours ten feet by ten, frugal boards, and all the homeliness of home—these were the condition of my birth—the wholesome soil which I was planted in.

Yet without impeachment to their tenderest lessons, I am not sorry to have had glances of something beyond; and to have taken, if but a peep, in childhood, at the contrasting accidents of a great fortune.

In this essay, save for the change of Blakesware to Blakesmoor, the experience is related without disguise. But it is not always easy to disengage fact from fiction in these more personal confessions. Lamb had a love of mystifying and putting his readers on a false scent. And the difficulty of getting at the truth is the greater because

[1] Marvell on Appleton House, to the Lord Fairfax.

he is often most outspoken when we should expect him to be reticent, and on the other hand alters names and places when there would seem to be little reason for it. A curious instance of this habit is supplied by the touching reverie called *Dream Children*. This essay appeared in the *London* for January, 1822. Lamb's elder brother John was then lately dead. A letter to Wordsworth, of March in this year, mentions his death as recent, and speaks of a certain "deadness to everything," which the writer dated from that event. The "broad, burly, jovial" John Lamb (so Talfourd describes him), had lived his own, easy, prosperous life up to this time, not altogether avoiding social relations with his brother and sister, but evidently absorbed to the last in his own interests and pleasures. The death of this brother, wholly unsympathetic as he was with Charles, served to bring home to him his loneliness. He was left in the world with but one near relation, and that one too often removed from him for months at a time by the saddest of afflictions. No wonder if he became keenly aware of his solitude. No wonder if his thoughts turned to what *might* have been, and he looked back to those boyish days when he wandered in the glades of Blakesware with Alice by his side. He imagines himself with his little ones, who have crept round him to hear stories about their "great-grandmother Field." For no reason that is apparent, while he retains his grandmother's real name, he places the house in Norfolk, but all the details that follow are drawn from Blakesware. "Then I went on to say how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by everybody, though she was not indeed the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it too)

committed to her by its owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in an adjoining county;[2] but still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up, and looked as awkward as if some one were to carry away the old tombs they had seen lately at the abbey and stick them up in Lady C.'s tawdry gilt drawing-room. Here John smiled, as much as to say, 'That would be foolish indeed.'"

Inexpressibly touching, when we have once learned to penetrate the thin disguise in which he clothes them, are the hoarded memories, the tender regrets, which Lamb, writing by his "lonely hearth," thus ventured to commit to the uncertain sympathies of the great public. More touching still is the almost superhuman sweetness with which he deals with the character of his lately lost brother. He had named his little ones after this brother, and after their "pretty dead mother"—John and Alice. And there is something of the magic of genius, unless, indeed, it was a burst of uncontrollable anguish, in the revelation with which his dream ends. He kept still, as always, the secret of his beloved's name. But he tells us who it was that won the prize from him, and it is no secret that in this case the real name is given. The conclusion of this essay must be our last extract, but it would be difficult to find one more worthy:—

Then in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though

[2] This is, of course, Gilston, the other seat of the Plumer family.

their great-grandmother Field loved all her grandchildren, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L——, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us; and instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettlesome horse he could get, when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over the county in a morning, and join the hunters when there were any out; and yet he loved the old house and gardens too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries; and how their uncle grew up to man's estate as brave as he was handsome, to the admiration of everybody, but of their great-grandmother Field most especially; and how he used to carry me upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy—for he was a good bit older than me—many a mile when I could not walk for pain; and how in after-life he became lame-footed too, and I did not always (I fear) make allowance enough for him when he was impatient and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed; and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there is betwixt life and death; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me; and though I did not cry or take it to heart as some do, and as I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness and I missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again to be quarrelling with him (for we quarrelled sometimes), rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him as he their poor uncle must have been when the doctor took off his limb. Here the children fell a-crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for Uncle John, and they looked up and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W——n; and as much as children could understand, I explained

to them what coyness and difficulty and denial meant in maidens —when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of representment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartram father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence and a name"—and immediately awaking I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side; but John L. (or James Elia) was gone for ever.

The space available for quotation is exhausted, and many sides of Lamb's peculiar faculty are still unrepresented. Those who have yet to make his acquaintance may be advised to read, in addition to those already named, the essay *On Some of the Old Actors*, containing the analysis of the character of Malvolio, a noble example of the uses which Shakespearian criticism may be made to serve—the extract from a letter to his friend Barron Field, a judge in New South Wales, entitled, *Distant Correspondents*, and that called *The Praise of Chimney Sweepers*. Belonging to the *personal* group, which includes *Blakesmoor* and *Dream Children*, is the paper *Mackery End in Hertfordshire*, scarcely less delightful. The two critical essays on Sidney and Wither (the latter, however, does not belong to the Elia series), contain some of Lamb's most subtle criticism and most eloquent writing. *Barbara S.* is an anecdote of Fanny Kelly's early life;

and *Captain Jackson* is a character-sketch, which, despite the vast difference between the two writers, curiously suggests the fine hand of Miss Austen. Lastly, the paper with the startling title, *Confessions of a Drunkard*, is not to be overlooked. A strange interest attaches to this paper. It had been originally written by Lamb, at the request of a friend, as one of a series of Temperance Tracts. In this capacity it had been quoted in an article in the *Quarterly*, for April, 1822, as "a fearful picture of the consequences of intemperance," which the reviewer went on to say "we have reason to know is a true tale." In order to give the author the opportunity of contradicting this statement, the tract was reprinted in the *London* in the following August, under the signature of Elia. To it were appended a few words of remonstrance with the *Quarterly* reviewer for assuming the literal truthfulness of these confessions, but accompanied with certain significant admissions that showed Lamb had no right to be seriously indignant. "It is indeed," he writes, "a compound extracted out of his long observations of the effects of drinking upon all the world about him; and this accumulated mass of misery he hath centred (as the custom is with judicious essayists) in a single figure We deny not that a portion of his own experiences may have passed into the picture (as who, that is not a washy fellow, but must at some time have felt the after-operation of a too generous cup?); but then how heightened! how exaggerated! how little within the sense of the Review, where a part, in their slanderous usage, must be understood to stand for the whole." The truth is that Lamb in writing his tract had been playing with edge-tools, and could hardly have complained if they turned against himself. It would be those who knew Lamb, or at least

the circumstances of his life, best, who would be most likely to accept these confessions as true. For in the course of them he gives with curious fidelity the outline of an experience that was certainly not imaginary. The 'friendly harpies" who came about him for his gin-and-water, and made its consumption more and more a habit; the exchange of these in due course for companions of a better type, "of intrinsic and felt worth;" the substitution for a while, under the influence of two of these, of the "sweet enemy" tobacco, and the new slavery to this counter-attraction; the increasing need of stimulant to set his wits to work, and the buffoonery indulged under its effects; all this is told in a way that no friend of Lamb could affect to mistake. No doubt the exaggeration which Lamb pleads is there also, and the drunkard's utter collapse and misery are described in a style which, as applied to himself, was absurd. But to call the insinuation that the tract had in it biographic truth, "malignant," as some of Lamb's apologists have done, is not less absurd. The essay has enough reality in it to live as a very powerful plea for the virtue of self-restraint, and it may continue to do good service in the cause.

De Quincey has observed that one chief pleasure we derive from Lamb's writing is due to a secret satisfaction in feeling that his admirers must always of necessity be a select few. There is an unpleasantly cynical flavour about the remark, but at the same time one understands to what it points. Thoroughly to understand and enjoy Charles Lamb, one must have come to entertain a feeling towards him almost like personal affection, and such a circle of intimates will always be small. It is necessary to come to the study of his writings in entire trustfulness, and having first cast away all prejudice. The reader must be content to enjoy

what is set before him, and not to grumble because any chance incident on the road tempts the writer away from the path on which he set out. If an Essay is headed *Oxford in the Vacation*, he must not complain that only half the paper touches on Oxford, and that the rest is divided between the writer Elia, and a certain absent-minded old scholar, George Dyer, on whose peculiarities Lamb was never weary of dwelling. What, then, is the compensating charm? What is there in these rambling and multifarious meditations that proves so stimulating and suggestive? There is an epithet commonly applied to Lamb so hackneyed that one shrinks from using it once more—the epithet "delightful." No other word certainly seems more appropriate, and it is perhaps because (in defiance of etymology) the sound of it suggests that double virtue of illuminating, and making happy. It is in vain to attempt to convey an idea of the impression left by Lamb's style. It evades analysis. One might as well seek to account for the perfume of lavender, or the flavour of quince. It is in truth an essence, prepared from flowers and herbs gathered in fields where the ordinary reader does not often range. And the nature of the writer—the alembic in which these various simples were distilled—was as rare for sweetness and purity as the best of those enshrined in the old folios—his "midnight darlings." If he had by nature the delicate grace of Marvell, and the quaint fancy of Quarles, he also shared the chivalry of Sidney, and could lay on himself "the lowliest duties," in the spirit of his best-beloved of all, John Milton. It is the man, Charles Lamb, that constitutes the enduring charm of his written words. He is, as I have said, an egotist—but an egotist without a touch of vanity or self-assertion—an egotist without a grain of envy or ill-nature. When asked one

day whether he did not hate some person under discussion, he retorted, "How could I hate him? Don't I know him? I never could hate any one I knew." It is this humanity that gives to his intellect its flexibility and its deep vision, that is the feeder at once of his pathos and his humour.

CHAPTER VII.

COLEBROOK ROW, ISLINGTON—THE CONTROVERSY WITH SOUTHEY, AND RETIREMENT FROM THE INDIA HOUSE.

(1823—1826.)

THE last six years of Lamb's life, though the most remarkable in his literary annals, had not been fruitful in incident. The death of his elder brother, already mentioned, was the one event that nearly touched his heart and spirits. Its effect had been, with the loss of some other friends about the same time, to produce, he said, "a certain deadness to everything." It had brought home to him his loneliness, and moreover served to increase a long felt weariness of the monotony of office life. Already, in the beginning of 1822, he was telling Wordsworth, "I grow ominously tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not subdued to the yoke. You don't know how wearisome it is to breathe the air of four pent walls, without relief, day after day, all the golden hours of the day between ten and four, without ease or interposition. *Tædet me harum quotidianarum formarum*, these pestilential clerk-faces always in one's dish. . . . . I dare not whisper to myself a pension on this side of absolute incapacitation and infirmity, till years have sucked me dry—*otium cum indignitate*. I had thought in a green old age (O green

thought!) to have retired to Ponder's End, emblematic name, how beautiful! in the Ware Road, there to have made up my accounts with heaven and the Company, toddling about it between it and Cheshunt, anon stretching, on some fine Isaac Walton morning, to Hoddesden or Amwell, careless as a beggar; but walking, walking ever till I fairly walked myself off my legs, dying walking! The hope is gone. I sit like Philomel all day (but not singing) with my heart against this thorn of a desk." Very touching, by the side of the delightful suggestion of Ponder's End, is the dream of retirement to the Ware Road—the road, that is to say, that led to Widford and Blakesware. If these were not to him exactly what Auburn was to Goldsmith, he still at times had hopes,—

> His long vexation past,
> There to return, and die at home at last.

Three years were, however, to elapse before he was at liberty to choose his own place of residence. It is significant that though he could never bring himself to live quite beyond reach of town, and the "sweet security of streets," it was in the Hertfordshire direction that he turned in his last days, and died as it were half-way between London and that quiet Hertfordshire village, the two places he loved best on earth.

There was one incident in those Russell Street days that would have been an event indeed in the life of most home-keeping men who had reached middle life without having once left English shores. In the summer holiday of 1822 Charles and his sister made a trip to Paris. At whose suggestion, or in obedience to what sudden impulse, they were led to make so violent a change in their usual habits, there is nothing to show. They left England in

the middle of June, and two months later we find Mary Lamb still in Paris, and seeing the sights under the direction of their friend, Crabb Robinson. Charles, who had returned earlier to England, had left a characteristic note of instructions for his sister's guidance, advising her to walk along the "Borough side of the Seine," where she would find a mile and a half of print-shops and book-stalls. "Then," he adds, not unfairly describing a first impression of Père-la-Chaise, "there is a place where the Paris people put all their dead people, and bring them flowers and dolls and gingerbread-nuts and sonnets and such trifles; and that is all, I think, worth seeing as sights, except that the streets and shops of Paris are themselves the best sight." In a note to Barron Field on his return, he adds a few more of his experiences, how he had eaten frogs, fricasseed, "the nicest little delicate things," and how the Seine was "exactly the size to run through a magnificent street."

He finds time, however, to add to his hasty note the pleasant intelligence that he had met Talma. Kenney, the dramatist, was at this time living at Versailles, and to him Lamb owed this introduction. Talma had lately given a thousand francs for what he was assured was an authentic portrait of Shakespeare, and he invited Kenney to bring Lamb to see it. "It is painted," Lamb writes, "on the one half of a pair of bellows, a lovely picture, corresponding with the folio head." It is hard to believe that Lamb had any doubts about the spuriousness of this relic, though his language on the point is dubious. He quotes the rhymes "in old carved wooden letters" that surrounded the portrait, and adds the significant remark that Ireland was not found out by his parchments, but by his poetry. And perhaps he did not wish to hurt Talma's feelings. It

was arranged that the party should see the tragedian in Regulus the same evening, and that he should sup with them after the performance. Lamb, we are told, "could not at all enter into the spirit of French acting, and in his general distaste made no exception in favour of his intended guest. This, however, did not prevent their mutual and high relish of each other's character and conversation, nor was any allusion made to the performance, till, on rising to go, Talma inquired how he liked it. Lamb shook his head and smiled. 'Ah!' said Talma. 'I was not very happy to-night: you must see me in Sylla.' 'Incidit in Scyllam,' said Lamb, 'qui vult vitare Charybdim.' 'Ah! you are a rogue; you are a great rogue,' said Talma, shaking him cordially by the hand, as they parted."

There is a sad story, only too likely to be true, that Mary Lamb was seized with one of her old attacks on the journey, and had to be left at Amiens in charge of her attendant. If so, it may account for her brother avoiding the subject in later essays and letters. An Elia essay embodying even the surface impressions of a month's stay in Paris would have been a welcome addition to the number. Lamb was usually prompt to seize on the latest incident in his life and turn it to this purpose. When short-sighted George Dyer, leaving the cottage at Islington, walked straight into the New River in broad daylight, the adventure appears the very next month in the *London Magazine*, under the heading of *Amicus Redivivus*. But France and the French do not seem to have opened any new vein of humour or observation. In truth, Lamb was unused to let his sympathies go forth save in certain customary directions. Any persons, and any book that he had come to know well—any one of the "old

familiar faces"—served to draw out those sympathies. But novelties he almost always passed by unmoved.

The first series of Lamb's essays, under the title of "*Elia —Essays that have appeared under that signature in the London Magazine*—was published in a single volume by Taylor and Hessey at the opening of the year 1823. It contained the contributions of something less than two years. As yet there was assuredly no sign of failing power in the brain and heart that produced them. Nor did Lamb cease to contribute to the magazine and elsewhere after the appearance of the first volume. The second series, published ten years later, is an exception to the rule that sequels must necessarily be failures. *Old China* and *Poor Relations*, the *Old Margate Hoy*, *Blakesmoor*, *Barbara S.*, and the *Superannuated Man*, which are found in the second series, exhibit all Lamb's qualities at their highest. It was perhaps only a passing mood of melancholy that made him write to Bernard Barton, in March, 1823, when the book had already begun to make its mark—"They have dragged me again into the magazine, but I feel the spirit of the thing in my own mind quite gone. 'Some brains' (I think Ben Jonson says it) 'will endure but one skimming.'" But another cause for this depression may have been at work. There was a painful incident connected with the *Elia* volume from the first, for which even the quick appreciation of the public could not compensate. There had been one exception to the welcome with which the book had been greeted. A word of grave disapprobation, or what had seemed such to Lamb, had been heard amid the chorus of approval, and this word had been spoken by a dear and valued friend.

In the *Quarterly Review* of January, 1823, appeared an

article, known to be by Southey, professing to be a review of a work by Gregoire, ex-Bishop of Blois, on the rise and progress of Deism in France. After the fashion of reviewers, Southey had made the book an occasion for a general survey of the progress of free thought in England as well as abroad, and the article was issued with the alarming title, *Progress of Infidelity*. Towards its close Southey is led very characteristically into many general reflections on the reasonableness of belief, and the unreasonableness of scepticism, and while engaged on this line of thought, it seems to have occurred to him that he might at once "point a moral" and call attention to a friend's book, by a quotation from the then newly published volume of Lamb. And this is how he set about it :—

"Unbelievers have not always been honest enough thus to express their real feelings; but this we know concerning them, that when they have renounced their birthright of hope, they have not been able to divest themselves of fear. From the nature of the human mind this might be presumed, and in fact it is so. They may deaden the heart and stupefy the conscience, but they cannot destroy the imaginative faculty. There is a remarkable proof of this in *Elia's Essays*, a book which wants only a sounder religious feeling, to be as delightful as it is original. In that upon *Witches and other Night Fears*, he says 'It is not book or picture, or the stories of foolish servants, which create these terrors in children. They can at most but give them a direction. Dear little T. H., who of all children has been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition, who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or scarcely to be told of bad men, or to hear or read of any distressing story, finds all this world of fear, from which he has been

so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own "thick-coming fancies;" and from his little midnight pillow this nurse-child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the cell-damned murderer are tranquillity.'"

I have had occasion to refer to this essay before, in speaking of Lamb's childhood. For, as usual, it originated in his own experience. He was led to relate how from the age of four to seven his nightly sleep had been disturbed by childish terrors, in which the grim picture of Saul and the Witch, in Stackhouse's *History of the Bible* had borne so prominent a part. And then, in order to strengthen his argument that these terrors are nervous, and not to be traced to any gloomy or improper religious training, he cites the parallel case, within his own knowledge, of "dear little T. H." All Lamb's friends and associates knew that this was little Thornton Hunt, Leigh Hunt's eldest son. The use of initials was really no disguise at all. Lamb admitted in his subsequent remonstrance with Southey that to call him T. H. was "as good as naming him." If the sanctity of private life had been violated, it was certainly Lamb who had set the example. But, as certainly, he had said nothing to the discredit of the poor child or his parents. According to the ethics of journalism current sixty years ago there was nothing uncommon in this way of indicating living people. Lamb was specially fond of bringing in his friends and acquaintances by their initials. His own family, Coleridge, Norris, Barron Field, and many others, occur repeatedly in his writings in this guise. He was intimate with Leigh Hunt and his young family, and sincerely attached to them. Nothing had been further from his thoughts than to cast any kind of slight upon the little boy, "Thornton Hunt, my favourite

Epistle to Elia, signed "Olen," in the *London Magazine* for August, 1821. Elia had been there taken to task, in lines of much eloquence and feeling, for his negative views on the subject of a future life. And indeed, for all the dallying with paradox, and the free blending of fact with fiction, in this singular paper, the fragments of personal confession are very remarkable. There are few things in literature more pathetic than the contrast drawn between the two stages of his own life, as if he would have given the lie sadly to his friend's adage about the child being father of the man :—

If I know aught of myself, no one whose mind is introspective—and mine is painfully so—can have a less respect for his present identity, than I have for the man Elia. I know him to be light, and vain, and humoursome; a notorious . . . . ; addicted to . . . . ; averse from counsel, neither taking it nor offering it; . . . . besides; a stammering buffoon; what you will; lay it on, and spare not; I subscribe to it all, and much more than thou canst be willing to lay at his door—but for the child Elia—that "other me" there in the background—I must take leave to cherish the remembrance of that young master, with as little reference, I protest, to this stupid changeling of five-and-forty as if it had been a child of some other house, and not of my parents. I can cry over its patient small-pox at five, and rougher medicaments. I can lay its poor fevered head upon the sick pillow at Christ's, and wake with it in surprise at the gentle posture of maternal tenderness hanging over it, that unknown had watched its sleep. I know how it shrank from any the least colour of falsehood. God help thee, Elia, how art thou changed! Thou art sophisticated. I know how honest, how courageous (for a weakling) it was; how religious, how imaginative, how hopeful! From what have I not fallen if the child I remember was indeed myself, and not some dissembling guardian, presenting a false identity, to give the rule to my unpractised steps, and regulate the tone of my moral being.

diablerie that Southey had not disdained to write, and to publish. Nor was Southey, we may be sure, offended by so genuinely earnest a plea for temperance and rational gratitude as is contained in the essay *Grace before Meat*. Rather (as Lamb evidently suspected) was it such a vein of speculation as that followed out in *New Year's Eve*, which would cause a strange chill to the simple faith and steadfast hopefulness of his friend. As I have said, Lamb seems in this essay to have written with the express purpose of presenting the reverse side of a passage in his favourite *Religio Medici*. Sir Thomas Browne had there written—"I thank God I have not those strait ligaments, or narrow obligations to the world, as to dote on life, or be convulsed and tremble at the name of death." "When I take a full view and circle of myself without this reasonable moderator, and equal piece of justice, death, I do conceive myself the miserablest person extant." Lamb may have argued (in the very words applied to this treatise in the essay on *Imperfect Sympathies*) that it was all very well for the author of the *Religio Medici*, "mounted upon the airy stilts of abstraction" to "overlook the impertinent individualities of such poor concretions as mankind," but that to him, Elia, death meant something by no means to be defined as a "reasonable moderator," and "equal piece of justice." He clung to the things he saw and loved—the friends, the books, the streets and crowds around him, and he was not ashamed to confess that death meant for him the absence of all these, and that he could not look it steadfastly in the face.

It is worth noticing that the profound melancholy of this essay had already attracted attention, and formed the subject of a copy of verses, in the form of a *Poetical*

subject were to be collected—but I love and respect Southey, and will not retort. I hate his review and his being a reviewer. The hint he has dropped will knock the sale of the book on the head, which was almost at a stop before." This last apprehension was evidently groundless. There is no reason to suppose that the book made its way more slowly for the paragraph in the review. For whatever here and there is morbid in them, the *Essays* themselves contain the best antidote.

Lamb could not resist the opportunity it afforded him for a fresh essay of Elia, and in the *London* for October, 1823, appeared the *Letter of Elia to Robert Southey, Esq.* As a whole, it is not one of Lamb's happiest efforts. His more valid grounds of complaint against the review are set forth with sufficient dignity and force. He urges quite fairly that to say a book "wants a sounder religious feeling," is to say either too much or too little. And the indecency of attacking Leigh Hunt through his own child, a boy of twelve, is properly rebuked. But when Lamb carries the war into the enemy's territory, he is less successful. As two blacks do not make a white, it was beside the mark to make laborious fun over Southey's youthful ballads; and the grievance as to the fees extorted from visitors to Westminster Abbey comes in rather flatly as a peroration. The concluding paragraphs of the letter are the only portions that Lamb afterwards thought well to reprint. They appeared, ten years later, in the Second Series of *Elia* under the title of *Tombs of the Abbey*. The letter, as a whole, is given in Talfourd's Memorials.

Lamb was not so deeply moved by Southey's criticism but that he could make some sport over his annoyance. What actually galled him was the attack, through himself, upon a friend. In previous articles in the same Review

he had found himself complimented at the expense of another friend, William Hazlitt. And now he took the opportunity to vindicate his friendship for both Hunt and Hazlitt in a passage that forms the most interesting and valuable portion of the letter. There had been a coolness, he tells us, between himself and Hazlitt, and it is pleasant to know that Lamb's generosity of tone at this time helped to make the relations between them once more cordial. "Protesting," he says, "against much that he has written, and some things which he chooses to do; judging him by his conversation which I enjoyed so long, and relished so deeply; or by his books, in those places where no clouding passion intervenes, I should belie my own conscience if I said less than that I think W. H. to be, in his natural and healthy state, one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing. So far from being ashamed of that intimacy which was betwixt us, it is my boast that I was able for so many years to have preserved it entire; and I think I shall go to my grave without finding or expecting to find such another companion." Not less manly and noble is the justification of his steady friendship for Leigh Hunt, at that time living abroad, and with a reputation in England of ill savour with those to whom the pages of the *Quarterly* were addressed. "L. H. is now in Italy; on his departure to which land, with much regret, I took my leave of him and of his little family, seven of them, sir, with their mother, and as kind a set of little people (T. H and all), as affectionate children as ever blessed a parent. Had you seen them, sir, I think you could not have looked upon them as so many little Jonases, but rather as pledges of the vessel's safety, that was to bear such a freight of love. I wish you would read Mr. H.'s lines to that same T. H., "six years old, during a sickness,"—

Sleep breathes at last from out thee,
My little patient boy—

(they are to be found on the 47th page of *Foliage*)—and ask yourself how far they are out of the spirit of Christianity."

As he wrote these words, Lamb may have recalled how his own unfailing sympathy had been a comfort to this friend in those darker days when Leigh Hunt was undergoing his two years' imprisonment in the Surrey jail for his newspaper attack on the Prince Regent. Lamb and his sister were among the Hunts' most regular visitors at that time. "My eldest little boy," writes Hunt in his *Autobiography*, "was my constant companion, and we used to play all sorts of juvenile games together." And it was on watching the child at play among the uncongenial surroundings of prison life that Lamb had written his own lines to "T. L. H.—a child," comforting child and father with the thought that the time of deliverance was at hand, when the boy would be once more in his native element, breathing the healthful air and plucking the wild flowers on Hampstead Heath. Lamb was always tender over children, and these lines have a simplicity, over and above their studied quaintness, that savours pleasantly of Blake :—

Guileless traitor, rebel mild,
Convict unconscious, culprit-child!
Gates that close with iron roar
Have been to thee thy nursery door:
Chains that chink in cheerless cells
Have been thy rattles and thy bells:
Walls contrived for giant sin
Have hemmed thy faultless weakness in:
Near thy sinless bed black guilt
Her discordant house hath built,

And filled it with her monstrous brood—
Sights by thee not understood—
Sights of fear, and of distress,
That pass a harmless infant's guess!
But the clouds that overcast
Thy young morning, may not last.
Soon shall arrive the rescuing hour
That yields thee up to Nature's power.
Nature that so late doth greet thee
Shall in o'erflowing measure meet thee.
She shall recompense with cost
For every lesson thou hast lost.
Then wandering up thy sire's loved hill
Thou shalt take thy airy fill
Of health and pastime. *Birds shall sing*
For thy delight each May morning.
'Mid new-yeaned lambkins thou shalt play,
Hardly less a lamb than they.
Then thy prison's lengthened bound
Shall be the horizon skirting round.
And, while thou fill'st thy lap with flowers
To make amends for wintry hours,
The breeze, the sunshine, and the place,
Shall from thy tender brow efface
Each vestige of untimely care
That sour restraint had graven there;
And on thy every look impress
A more excelling childishness.
So shall be thy days beguiled,
Thornton Hunt, my favourite child.

Southey first learned from the pages of the *London Magazine* the effect of the language used by him in the *Quarterly Review*. "On my part," he wrote to his publisher, after reading Lamb's epistle, "there was not even a momentary feeling of anger. I was very much surprised and grieved, because I knew how much he would condemn himself, and yet no resentful letter was ever written less offensively; his gentle nature may be seen in it through-

out." Southey was in London in the month after the publication of Lamb's remonstrance, and wrote him a letter in language full of affection and sorrow. The soreness at once passed away. "Dear Southey," he replied, "the kindness of your note has melted away the mist which was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. That accursed *Q. R.* had vexed me by a gratuitous speaking, of its own knowledge, that the *Confessions of a D——d* was a genuine description of the state of the writer. Little things that are not ill meant may produce much ill. *That* might have injured me alive and dead: I am in a public office, and my life is insured. I was prepared for anger, and I thought I saw in a few obnoxious words a hard case of repetition directed against me. I wish both Magazine and Review at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) still more so; for the folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at that time. I will muster up courage to see you, however, any day next week. We shall hope that you will bring Edith with you. That will be a second mortification. She will hate to see us; but come, and heap embers. We deserve it—I for what I've done, and she for being my sister." The visit was paid, and the old intimacy renewed, never again to be weakened by unkindly word.

In this note to Southey, Lamb has to tell of a change of address. In August of this year he and his sister had finally moved from Russell Street, and for the first time in their united lives became householders. The rooms over the brazier's had from the first had many drawbacks, and for some years the brother and sister had occasionally retired to a rural lodging at Dalston, partly to enjoy a short

respite from the din of the theatres and the market, but chiefly that Charles might be able to write without interruption from the increasing band of intruders on his scanty leisure. There is a pretty glimpse of one such period of retreat in a note to Miss Hutchinson of April in this year—"Meanwhile of afternoons we pick up primroses at Dalston, and Mary corrects me when I call 'em cowslips." And now they resolved to fix their tent permanently within reach of primroses and cowslips, and Charles must tell the story in his own words. He writes to Bernard Barton:—"When you come Londonward, you will find me no longer in Covent Garden. I have a cottage in Colebrook Row, Islington; a cottage, for it is detached; a white house with six good rooms; the New River (rather elderly by this time) runs (if a moderate walking pace can be so termed) close to the foot of the house; and behind is a spacious garden with vines (I assure you), pears, strawberries, parsnips, leeks, carrots, cabbages, to delight the heart of old Alcinous. You enter without passage into a cheerful dining-room, all studded over and rough with old books; and above is a lightsome drawing-room, three windows, full of choice prints. I feel like a great lord, never having had a house before." The sequel must be given, so amusingly illustrative of the snares and pitfalls that are inseparable even from rural felicity:—"I am so taken up with pruning and gardening, quite a new sort of occupation to me. I have gathered my Jargonels, but my Windsor pears are backward. The former were of exquisite raciness. I do now sit under my own vine and contemplate the growth of vegetable nature. I can now understand in what sense they speak of father Adam. I recognize the paternity while I watch my tulips. I almost fell with him, for the first day I turned a drunken

gardener (as he let in the serpent) into my Eden, and he laid about him, lopping off some choice boughs, &c., which hung over from a neighbour's garden, and in his blind zeal laid waste a shade which had sheltered their window from the gaze of passers-by. The old gentlewoman (fury made her not handsome) could scarcely be reconciled by all my fine words. There was no buttering her parsnips. She talked of the law. What a lapse to commit on the first day of my happy 'garden state'!"

The same letter tells of the failing fortunes of the *London Magazine*. Lamb was still contributing to its pages, though not so regularly as of old. He speaks of himself as lingering among its creaking rafters, like the last rat, and of many ominous secessions from the ranks of its old supporters. Hazlitt and Procter had forsaken it, and with them one who might well have been spared before, the wretched Wainwright, who had contributed to its pages various flimsy and conceited rhapsodies on art and letters. It is characteristic of Lamb that he always finds some good-natured word to say of this man, such as "kind" or "light-hearted," principally, no doubt, because the others of his set looked on him with some suspicion. It was his way to seek for the redeeming qualities in those the world looked coldly on. He did not live to know the worst of this now notorious hypocrite and scoundrel.

In their autumn holiday of 1823, Charles and Mary Lamb made an acquaintance destined for the next ten years to add a new and most happy interest to their lonely lives. They were still faithful to the University towns in vacation time, and at the house of a friend in Cambridge, where Charles liked to play his evening game at whist, they found a little girl, the orphan daughter of Charles Isola, one of the Esquire Bedells of the University; her

grandfather, an Italian refugee, having settled in Cambridge as teacher of his own language. The child, who was at other times at school, spent her holidays with an aunt in Cambridge. The Lambs took a strong fancy to her, invited her to stay with them during her next holidays, and finally adopted her. She called them uncle and aunt, and their house was generally her home, until her marriage with Mr. Moxon, the publisher, in 1833. The education of this young girl became the constant care of the brother and sister. They wished to give her the means of becoming herself a teacher, in the event of her not marrying, and while Charles taught her Latin, Mary Lamb worked hard at French that she might assist her young pupil. Many are the allusions in the letters of the last years to "our Emma;" and as Mary Lamb's periods of mental derangement became more and more frequent and protracted, this new relationship became ever a greater comfort to them both.

In the meantime Charles was fretting under the unbroken confinement of office life. "I have been insuperably dull and lethargic for many weeks," he writes to Bernard Barton early in 1824, "and cannot rise to the vigour of a letter, much less an essay. The *London* must do without me for a time, for I have lost all interest about it." A subsequent letter, in August, tells the same tale of increasing weariness. "The same indisposition to write has stopped my 'Elias,' but you will see a futile effort in the next number, 'wrung from me with slow pain.' The fact is, my head is seldom cool enough. I am dreadfully indolent." The "futile effort" in the next number was no other than the beautiful essay on *Blakesmoor*, fresh proof (if any were needed) that "difficult writing" need not make itself felt as such by the reader. Nothing more

unforced in style ever came from Charles Lamb's hand—no sentences more perfect in feeling and expression than those with which it ends:—

> Mine, too—whose else?—the costly fruit-garden, with its sun-baked southern wall; the ampler pleasure-garden, rising backwards from the house in triple terraces, with flower-pots, now of palest lead, save that a speck, here and there, saved from the elements, bespoke their pristine state to have been gilt and glittering; the verdant quarters, backwarder still; and, stretching still beyond, in old formality, the firry wilderness, the haunt of the squirrel and the day-long-murmuring wood-pigeon, with that antique image in the centre, god or goddess I wist not; but child of Athens or old Rome paid never a sincerer worship to Pan or to Sylvanus in their native groves, than I to that fragmental mystery.
>
> Was it for this, that I kissed my childish hands too fervently in your idol worship, walks and windings of Blakesmoor! for this, or what sin of mine, has the plough passed over your pleasant places? I sometimes think that as men, when they die, do not die all, so of their extinguished habitations there may be a hope—a germ to be revivified.

The "firry wilderness" still remains, and in the grassy meadow where house and garden once stood may faintly be traced the undulations of the ground where the triple terraces rose backwards; but this is all of the actual Blakesmoor that survives. Yet in this very essay Lamb has fulfilled his own happy vision, and revivified for all time that "extinguished habitation."

In spite of indolence and low spirits, the hand of Lamb had not lost its cunning, as the pretty Album verses written for Bernard Barton's daughter, Lucy, sufficiently testify. They were sent to Barton at the end of this month, September. "I am ill at these numbers," he

pleaded, "but if the above be not too mean to have a place in thy daughter's sanctum, take them with pleasure." The lines are interesting, as giving another proof of Lamb's native sympathy with the Quaker simplicity. His Elia essay on the *Quakers' Meeting* has shown it. He had impressed Leigh Hunt, when a boy, by his Quaker-like demeanour. He had conveyed to Hood, we remember, on their first meeting, the idea of a "Quaker in black." He had told Barton in an earlier letter, "In feelings, and matters not dogmatical, I hope I am half a Quaker." And here, taking the word *Album* as text, "little book, surnamed of *White*," he descants on the themes alone fitted to find shelter in such a home:—

> Whitest thoughts, in whitest dress,
> Candid meanings, best express
> Mind of quiet Quakeress.

In February and March of the following year, his letters to Barton—the correspondent who now drew forth his best and most varied powers—show that the desire for rest was becoming irritably strong. "Your gentleman brother sets my mouth watering after liberty. Oh that I were kicked out of Leadenhall with every mark of indignity, and a competence in my fob. The birds of the air would not be so free as I should. How I would prance and curvet it, and pick up cowslips, and ramble about purposeless as an idiot!" Later in March we learn that he had conveyed to the Directors of the East India Company his willingness to resign. "I am sick of hope deferred," he writes. "The grand wheel is in agitation that is to turn up my fortune; but round it rolls, and will turn up nothing. I have a glimpse of freedom, of becoming a gentleman at large, but I am put off from day to day. I have offered

my resignation, and it is neither accepted nor rejected. Eight weeks am I kept in this fearful suspense. Guess what an absorbing state I feel it. I am not conscious of the existence of friends, present or absent. The East India Directors alone can be that thing to me, or not. I have just learned that nothing will be decided this week. Why the next? why any week?"

When he wrote these words, the gratification of his hopes was nearer than he thought. He can scarcely have had any serious anxiety as to the result of his application. Some weeks before he had received some kind of intimation that the matter might be arranged to his satisfaction, and his medical friends had certified that failing health and spirits made the step at least desirable. But he had served only thirty-three years, and it was not unusual for clerks to complete a term of forty or fifty years' service, so that he may have had some uneasy doubts as to the amount of pension. But all doubts were happily dispelled on the last Tuesday in March, 1825, when the Directors sent for him and acquainted him with the resolution they had passed.

Lamb has described this interview in several letters, but nowhere so fully as in the Elia essay, the *Superannuated Man*, which, after his custom, he at once prepared for the next month's *London Magazine*. With the one exception, that he transforms the Directors of the India House into a private firm of merchants, and with one or two other slight changes of detail, the account seems to be a faithful version of what actually happened.

A week passed in this manner, the most anxious one, I verily believe, in my life, when on the evening of the 12th of April, just as I was about quitting my desk to go home (it might be

about eight o'clock) I received an awful summons to attend the presence of the whole assembled firm in the formidable back parlour. I thought, Now my time has surely come; I have done for myself. I am going to be told that they have no longer occasion for me. L——, I could see, smiled at the terror I was in, which was a little relief to me; when to my utter astonishment, B——, the eldest partner, began a formal harangue to me on the length of my services, my very meritorious conduct during the whole of the time (the deuce, thought I, how did he find out that? I protest I never had the confidence to think as much). He went on to descant on the expediency of retiring at a certain time of life (how my heart panted!) and asking me a few questions as to the amount of my own property, of which I have a little, ended with a proposal, to which his three partners nodded a grave assent, that I should accept from the house which I had served so well a pension for life to the amount of two-thirds of my accustomed salary—a magnificent offer! I do not know what I answered between surprise and gratitude, but it was understood that I accepted their proposal, and I was told that I was free from that hour to leave their service. I stammered out a bow, and at just ten minutes after eight I went home—for ever.

The munificence thus recorded was happily no fiction. Lamb's full salary at the time was little short of seven hundred a year, and the offer made to him was a pension of four hundred and fifty, with a deduction of nine pounds a year to secure a fitting provision for his sister, in the event of her surviving him. "Here am I," he writes to Wordsworth, 'after thirty-three years' slavery, sitting in my own room at eleven o'clock, this finest of all April mornings, a freed man, with 441*l.* a year for the remainder of my life, live I as long as John Dennis, who outlived his annuity, and starved at ninety.'"

The East India Directors seem to have been generous

and considerate in a marked degree. If they wished to pay some compliment to literature in the person of their distinguished clerk, it was not less to their credit. But in spite of Lamb's modest language as to his official claims upon their kindness, it would seem that he served them steadily and faithfully during those thirty-three years. Save for his brief annual holiday, he stuck to his post. He wrote his letters from the desk in Leadenhall Street, and received some of his callers there, but there is nothing to show that he neglected his daily work. He had sometimes to tell of headache and indisposition, as when he had been dining with the poets the night before, where they had not "quaffed Hippocrene, but Hippocrass rather." And there is a tradition,—not to be too curiously questioned—that on occasion of being reproved for coming to the office late in the mornings, he pleaded that he made up for it by going away very early. But these peccadilloes are as nothing set against the long extent of actual service, and the hearty and spontaneous action of his employers at its close.

Though Lamb had always fretted against what he called his slavery to the "desk's dead wood," the discipline of regular, and even of mechanical work, was of infinite service to him. With his special temperament, bodily and mental, he needed, of all men, the compulsion of duty. The "unchartered freedom" and the "weight of chance desires," which his friend Wordsworth has so feelingly lamented, would have been shipwreck to him. When deliverance from the necessity of toil came, he could not altogether resist their baneful effects. And we may be sure that we should not have had more, but fewer *Essays of Elia*, if the daily routine of different labour had been less severe or regular. He was well paid for the

best of his literary work, but there was no pressure upon him to write for bread. "Thank God," he writes to Bernard Barton, "you and I are something besides being writers! There is corn in Egypt, while there is cash at Leadenhall!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ENFIELD AND EDMONTON.

(1826—1834.)

"I CAME home FOR EVER on Tuesday in last week," Lamb writes to Wordsworth, on the 6th of April, 1825. "The incomprehensibleness of my condition overwhelmed me. It was like passing from life into eternity. Every year to be as long as three, i.e., to have three times as much real time—time that is my own, in it! I wandered about thinking I was happy, but feeling I was not. But that tumultuousness is passing off, and I begin to understand the nature of the gift. Holidays, even the annual month, were always uneasy joys: their conscious fugitiveness; the craving after making the most of them. Now, when all is holiday, there are no holidays. I can sit at home, in rain or shine, without a restless impulse for walkings. I am daily steadying, and shall soon find it as natural to me to be my own master, as it has been irksome to have had a master. Mary wakes every morning with an obscure feeling that some good has happened to us."

Certain misgivings as to the consequences of the step he had taken are apparent here, even in his words of congratulation. They appear elsewhere, as in a letter to Barton of the same month, where he tells how the day

before he had gone back and sat at his old desk among his old companions, and felt yearnings at having left them in the lurch. Still, he was forcing himself to take the most hopeful view of the change in his life, and the essay on the *Superannuated Man*, that appeared a month later in the *London*, elaborates with excellent skill the feelings which he wished to cultivate and preserve. "A man can never have too much Time to himself, nor too little to do. Had I a little son, I would christen him Nothing-to-do; he should do nothing. Man, I verily believe, is out of his element as long as he is operative. I am altogether for the life contemplative."

One of the earliest uses that he made of his freedom was to pay visits out of London with Mary. In the summer they are at Enfield, having quiet holidays. "Mary walks her twelve miles a day some days," Charles writes to Southey in August, "and I my twenty on others. 'Tis all holiday with me now, you know. The change works admirably." But as time went on, the change was found to be less admirable. The spur and the discipline of regular hours and occupation being taken away, Lamb had to make occupation, or else to find amusement in its stead. He had been always fond of walking, and he now tried the experiment of a companion in his walks in the shape of a dog, Dash, that Hood had given him. But the dog proved unmanageable, and was fond of running away down any other streets than those intended by his master, and Lamb had to part with him a year or two later in despair. He passed Dash on to Mr. Patmore, and to this change of ownership we owe the amusing letter in which he writes for information as to the dog's welfare. "Dear P., excuse my anxiety, but how is Dash? I should have asked if Mrs. Patmore kept her rules, and

was improving: but Dash came uppermost. The order of our thought should be the order of our writing. Goes he muzzled, or *aperto ore?* Are his intellects sound, or does he wander a little in *his* conversation? You cannot be too careful to watch the first symptoms of incoherence. The first illogical snarl he makes—to St. Luke's with him. All the dogs here are going mad, if you can believe the overseers: but I protest, they seem to me very rational and collected. But nothing is so deceitful as mad people, to those who are not used to them. Try him with hot water; if he won't lick it up it is a sign—he does not like it. Does his tail wag horizontally, or perpendicularly? That has decided the fate of many dogs in Enfield. Is his general deportment cheerful? I mean when he is pleased, for otherwise there is no judging. You can't be too careful. Has he bit any of the children yet? If he has, have them shot, and keep *him* for curiosity, to see if it is the hydrophobia"—and so this "excellent fooling" rambles on into still wilder extravagances. "We are dawdling our time away very idly and pleasantly" the letter concludes, "at a Mrs. Leishman's, Chace, Enfield, where if you come a hunting, we can give you cold meat and a tankard." For two years from the time of his leaving the India House, the brother and sister paid occasional visits to Mrs. Leishman's lodgings, until, finally, in 1827, they became sole tenants of the little house, furnished.

The year 1827 opened sadly for Charles and Mary Lamb. Since the death of their father, thirty years before, they had not had to mourn the loss of many friends connected with their early life. Their brother John had died five years before—but he had helped to make their real loneliness felt, rather than to relieve it—and they had no other near relations. But there was one dear friend

of the family, who had been associated with them in their seasons of heaviest sorrow and hardest struggle. This was Mr. Randal Norris, for many years sub-treasurer and librarian of the Inner Temple, whose name has occurred so often in Lamb's letters and essays. The families of Norris and Lamb were united by more than one bond of friendship. They were neighbours in the Temple for many years, and Mrs. Norris was a native of Widford, and a friend of the old housekeeper at Blakesware. And now Charles writes to Crabb Robinson to tell him that this, his oldest friend, is dying. "In him I have a loss the world cannot make up. He was my friend and my father's friend all the life I can remember. I seem to have made foolish friendships ever since. These are friendships which outlive a second generation. Old as I am waxing, in his eyes I was still the child he first knew me. To the last he called me Charley. I have none to call me Charley now. He was the last link that bound me to the Temple You are but of yesterday. In him seem to have died the old plainness of manners and singleness of heart." In a few days the lingering illness was over, and the old friend was laid to rest in the Temple Church-yard.

During the year that followed, Lamb found a congenial occupation, and a healthy substitute for his old regular hours, in working daily at the British Museum. He wished to assist Hone, the editor of the *Every Day Books*, and undertook to make extracts, on the plan of his former volumes of Dramatic Specimens, from the collection of plays bequeathed by Garrick to the British Museum, for publication in *Hone's Table Book*. "It is a sort of office-work to me," he writes to Barton, "hours, ten to four, the same. It does me

good. Man must have regular occupation that has been used to it." The extracts thus chosen were confessedly but gleanings after the earlier volumes, and in the scanty comments prefixed to them there is a corresponding falling off in interest. The remark upon *Gorboduc*, that "there may be flesh and blood underneath, but we cannot get at it" shows the old keenness of observation. And it is pleasant to hear him repeat once more that the plays of Shakespeare have been the "strongest and sweetest food of his mind from infancy." But the real impetus to the study of the great Elizabethans had been given in the volumes of 1808.

A series of short essays contributed in this same year to the *New Monthly Magazine*, under the title of *Popular Fallacies*, are for the most part of slight value. The one of these that was the author's favourite is suggested by the saying that "Home is home, though it is never so homely." The first exception that he propounds to the truth of this maxim is in the case of the "very poor." To places of cheap entertainment, and the benches of alehouses, Lamb says, the poor man "resorts for an image of the home which he cannot find at home." Very touching is the picture he goes on to draw of the discrepancy between the "humble meal shared together," as described by the sentimentalist, and the grim irony of the actual facts. "The innocent prattle of his children takes out the sting of a man's poverty. But the children of the very poor do not prattle. It is none of the least frightful features in that condition that there is no childishness in its dwellings. Poor people, said a sensible nurse to us once, do not bring up their children, they drag them up." The whole passage is in a strain of more sustained earnestness than is usual with Lamb, and serves to show how

widely his sympathetic heart had travelled. From this theme he turns to one which touched his own circumstances more nearly. There is yet another home, he says, which gives the lie to the popular saying. It may have all the material comforts that are wanting to the poor man, all its fire side conveniences, and yet be *no home*. "It is the house of the man that is infested with many visitors." And he goes on to draw the distinction between the noble-hearted friends that are always welcome, and the purposeless droppers in at meal-time, or just at the moment that you have sat down to a book. "They have a peculiarly compassionating sneer with which they hope that they do not interrupt your studies." It is Charles Lamb himself who is here publishing to the world the old grievance, which appears so constantly in his letters. He was being driven from Islington by the crowd of callers and droppers in, from whom he professed his inability to escape in any other way. Hardly is he settled at Enfield, in August 1827, when he has to protest that the swarm of gnats follows him from place to place. "Whither can I take wing," he writes to Barton "from the oppression of human faces? Would I were in a wilderness of apes, tossing cocoa-nuts about, grinning and grinned at!"

There is reason to believe, as already observed, that Lamb was in part responsible for these idle trespassers upon his time. He had not had the courage to keep them off when his days were fully occupied, and his evenings were his only time for literature; and now, when he passed for a man wholly at leisure, it was not likely that the annoyance would diminish. But the truth is, there was an element of irritability in Lamb, due to the family temperament, which the

new life, though he could now "wander at his own sweet will," was little calculated to appease. The rest of which he dreamed, when he retired in the prime of life from professional work, could only mean, to such a temperament as Lamb's, restlessness. He looked for relief from many troubles in the mere circumstance of change. It was the *cœlum, non animum* disillusion that so many have had to experience. And at the same time he hated having to break with old associations, and to part from anything to which he had been long accustomed. When he moved to Enfield, in the autumn of 1827, he wrote to Hood that he had had "*no* health" at Islington, and having found benefit from previous visits at Enfield, was going to make his abode there altogether. But, he adds, "'twas with some pain we were evulsed from Colebrook. To change habitations is to die to them; and in my time I have died seven deaths. But I don't know whether such change does not bring with it a rejuvenescence. 'Tis an enterprise; and shoves back the sense of death's approximating, which though not terrible to me, is at all times particularly distasteful." The letter ends in a more cheerful vein, with news of ten pounds a year less rent than at Islington, and many anticipations of occasional trips to London "to breathe the fresher air of the metropolis," and of the curds and cream he and Mary would set before Hood and Jerdan and other London friends who might visit them in their country home. Some of these joys were to be realized, and there are many signs of the old humour and fancy not having been altogether banished by the separation from London interests and friends. Mrs. Shelley meets him in town in August, 1828, and writes to Leigh Hunt, "On my return to the Strand, I saw Lamb, who was very entertaining

and amiable, though a little deaf. One of the first questions he asked me was, whether they made puns in Italy. I said 'Yes, now Hunt is there.' He said that Burney made a pun in Otaheite, the first that ever was made in that country. At first the natives could not make out what he meant; but all at once they discovered the pun, and danced round him in transports of joy."

Lamb's work in literature was now substantially over, and he did little more than trifle with it, pleasantly and ingeniously, for the last few years. The *London Magazine*, after a long decay, and many changes of management, came to an end in 1826; and though some of Lamb's later contributions to the *New Monthly* and the *Englishman's Magazine* were included in the *Last Essays of Elia*, collected and published in 1833, *Elia* may be said to have been born, and to have died, with the *London Magazine*. In 1828 he wrote, at the request of the wife of Thomas Hood, who had lately lost a child, the well-known lines, *On an infant dying as soon as born*, redolent of the spirit and fancy of Ben Jonson and the later Elizabethans, and though written to order showing no lack of spontaneity. He continued to supply his young lady friends with acrostics and other such contributions to their albums. He suffered, as he alleged, terrible things from albums at this time. They were another of the taxes he found ruthlessly exacted from "retired leisure." He writes to Procter in 1829:—

> We are in the last ages of the world, when St. Paul prophesied that women should be "headstrong, lovers of their own wills, having albums." I fled hither to escape the albumean persecution, and had not been in my new house twenty-four hours when the daughter of the next house came in with a friend's album to beg a contribution, and the following day intimated

she had one of her own. Two more have sprung up since. If I take the wings of the morning, and fly unto the uttermost parts of the earth, there will albums be. New Holland has albums. But the age is to be complied with.

He so far complied with the age as to produce enough, with a few occasional verses of other kinds, to make a little volume for his friend Moxon, then newly starting as a publisher, to issue in appropriate shape, in 1830.

The "new house" spoken of in the letter just quoted was the Enfield house already mentioned; but in the summer of 1829 Charles and Mary Lamb again changed their home. The sister's illnesses were becoming more frequent and more protracted, and the cares of housekeeping weighed too heavily on her. Their old servant, Becky, had married and left them, and they were little contented with her successor. There is a gloomy letter of Charles to his constant correspondent Barton, in July of this year, telling how time was *not* lightening the difficulties of a man with no settled occupation. He had been paying a visit in London, but even London was not what it had been.

The streets, the shops, are left, but all old friends are gone. . . . . When I took leave of our adopted young friend at Charing Cross, 'twas heavy, unfeeling rain, and I had nowhere to go. Home have I none, and not a sympathizing house to turn to in the great city. Never did the waters of heaven pour down on a forlorner head. . . . . I got home on Thursday, convinced that I was better to get home to my home at Enfield, and hide like a sick cat in my corner. And to make me more alone, our ill-tempered maid is gone, who, with all her airs, was yet a home-piece of furniture, a record of better days; the young thing that has succeeded her is good and attentive, but she is nothing. And I have no one here to talk over old matters with.

. . . . What I can do, and do over-do, is to walk; but deadly long are the days, these summer all-day days, with but a half-hour's candle-light and no fire-light. . . . . I pity you for over-work, but I assure you no work is worse. The mind preys on itself—the most unwholesome food. I bragged formerly that I could not have too much time. I have a surfeit. With few years to come, the days are wearisome. But weariness is not eternal. Something will shine out to take the load off that flags me, which is at present intolerable. I have killed an hour or two in this poor scrawl. I am a sanguinary murderer of time, and would kill him inch-meal just now. But the snake is vital. Well, I shall write merrier anon.

A letter of a week or two before had given sadder reasons for this depression of spirits. Mary Lamb had again been taken ill, and it had been necessary to remove her from home.

I have been very desolate indeed. My loneliness is a little abated by our young friend Emma having just come here for her holidays, and a schoolfellow of hers that was with her. Still the house is not the same, though she is the same.

It was these repeated illnesses of his sister, and the loss of their old servant, that made them resolve to give up housekeeping, and take lodgings next door ("Forty-two inches nearer town," Lamb said), with an old couple a Mr. and Mrs. Westwood, who undertook to board as well as lodge them. "We have both had much illness this year," he wrote to a friend, "and feeling infirmities and fretfulness grow upon us, we have cast off the cares of housekeeping, sold off our goods, and commenced boarding and lodging with a very comfortable old couple next door to where you found us. We use a sort of common table. Nevertheless, we have reserved a private one for an old

friend." In less than a week he was able to report the good effect of the change upon Mary. "She looks two and a half years younger for it. But we have had sore trials."

The next year opens with a letter to Wordsworth describing the new *ménage*, and containing a charming picture of the old couple who now were host and hostess as well as landlords.

> Our providers are an honest pair, Dame Westwood and her husband; he, when the light of prosperity shined on them, a moderately thriving haberdasher within Bow Bells, retired since with something under a competence; writes himself parcel gentleman; hath borne parish offices; sings fine old sea-songs at threescore and ten; sighs only now and then when he thinks that he has a son on his hands about fifteen, whom he finds a difficulty in getting out into the world; and then checks a sigh with muttering, as I once heard him prettily, not meaning to be heard, "I have married my daughter, however;" takes the weather as it comes; outsides it to town in severest season; and o' winter nights tells old stories not tending to literature (how comfortable to author-rid folks!), and has *one anecdote*, upon which and about forty pounds a year he seems to have retired in green old age.

The letter gives encouraging news of his sister's health and spirits, but the loneliness and the want of occupation are pressing heavily, he says, upon himself. He yearns for London and the cheerful streets. "Let no native Londoner imagine that health and rest, innocent occupation, interchange of converse sweet, and recreative study, can make the country anything better than altogether odious and detestable." Later, in March, his thoughts are diverted from his own condition, by the illness of Miss Isola; and a proposal from John Murray to con-

tinue the *Specimens of the Old Dramatists* is declined, because in his anxiety for their young protégée he could think of nothing else. Miss Isola happily recovered. Lamb fetched her from Suffolk, where the illness had occurred, to Enfield, and it was on the journey home that the famous stage-coach incident occurred. "We travelled with one of those troublesome fellow-passengers in a stage coach that is called a well-informed man. For twenty miles we discoursed about the properties of steam, probabilities of carriage by ditto, till all my science, and more than all, was exhausted, and I was thinking of escaping my torment by getting up on the outside, when, getting into Bishop Stortford, my gentleman, spying some farming land, put an unlucky question to me: 'What sort of crop of turnips I thought we should have this year?' Emma's eyes turned to me, to know what in the world I could have to say; and she burst into a violent fit of laughter, maugre her pale serious cheeks, when with the greatest gravity I replied that 'It depended, I believed, upon boiled legs of mutton.'"

There is little to record of incident or change in these last years of the life, now more and more lonely, of brother and sister. A small volume of occasional poetry, *Album Verses*—the amusements of the latter years of leisure—was produced by Mr. Moxon in 1830, but contains little to call for remark; and another venture of Mr. Moxon's, *The Englishman's Magazine*, in the following year, drew from Lamb some prose contributions, under the heading of *Peter's Net*. In 1833, the Lambs made their last change of residence. Their furniture had been disposed of when they settled at Enfield, and they now entered on an arrangement similar to the last, of boarding and lodging with another married pair—younger, however, and more

active—a Mr. and Mrs. Walden, of Bay Cottage, in the neighbouring parish of Edmonton. The reasons for the change are of the old sad kind. A letter to Wordsworth, of May, 1833, tells the melancholy story:—"Mary is ill again. Her illnesses encroach yearly. The last was three months, followed by two of depression most dreadful. I look back upon her earlier attacks with longing. Nice little durations of six weeks or so, followed by complete restoration, shocking as they were to me then. In short, half her life is dead to me, and the other half is made anxious with fears and lookings forward to the next shock." Mary Lamb had been on former occasions of illness under the care of the Waldens, and the increasing frequency of her attacks made this change necessary in the interest of both brother and sister. It secured for Mary the constant supervision of an attendant.

The same letter tells of an additional element of loneliness that was in store for them. Emma Isola was engaged "with my perfect approval and entire concurrence" to Mr. Moxon, the publisher, and the wedding was fixed. Lamb writes of it with the old habitual unselfishness, though it was to leave him without his "only walk-companion, whose mirthful spirits were the 'youth of our house.'" He turns, after his manner, to think of his compensations. He is emancipated from Enfield, with attentive people and younger, and what is more, is three or four miles nearer to his beloved town. Miss Isola was married on the 30th of July, and it is pleasant to know that though up to the very day of the wedding Mary Lamb had been unable to interest herself in the event, and was of course unable to be present at the ceremony, she attributes her recovery from this attack to the stimulus of the good news suddenly communicated.

There is a pathetic note of congratulation from her to the newly-married pair, in which she tells them of this with characteristic simplicity. The Waldens had with happy tact proposed Mr. and Mrs. Moxon's health, at their quiet meal. "It restored me from that moment," writes Mary Lamb, "as if by an electrical stroke, to the entire possession of my senses. I never felt so calm and quiet after a similar illness as I do now. I feel as if all tears were wiped from my eyes, and all care from my heart." And Charles is able to add, in a postscript, how they are again happy in their old pursuits—cards, walks, and reading: "never was such a calm, or such a recovery."

In this year 1833, the later essays of Lamb contributed to the *London Magazine*, together with some shorter pieces from other periodicals, were published by Mr. Moxon, under the title of the *Last Essays of Elia*, and with this event the literary life of Lamb was destined to close. Nothing more, beyond an occasional copy of verses for a friend, came from his pen. Notwithstanding the increasing illness of his sister, he was able to enjoy some cheerful society, notably with a friend of recent date, Mr. Cary, the translator of *Dante*, with whom he dined periodically at the British Museum. Mr. John Forster, afterwards to be known widely as the author of the *Life of Goldsmith*, was another accession to his list of congenial friends. But these could not make compensation for the loss of the old. Lamb was not yet sixty years of age, but he was without those ties and relationships which more than all else we know bring "forward-looking thoughts." His life was lived chiefly in the past, and one by one "the old familiar faces" were passing away. In July, 1834, Coleridge died, after many months of suffering. For the last eighteen years of his life he had resided

beneath Mr. Gilman's roof at Highgate, and Charles and Mary Lamb were among the most welcome visitors at the house: and now the friendship of fifty years was at an end. All the little asperities of early rivalry; all the natural regrets at sight of a life so wasted—powers so vast ending in performance so inadequate—a spirit so willing, and a will so weak—were forgotten now. Lamb had never spared the foibles of his old companion; when Coleridge had soared to his highest metaphysical flights he had apologized for him—"Yes! you know Coleridge is *so* full of his fun;"—he had described him as an "archangel, a little damaged;"—but the indescribable moral afflatus felt through Coleridge's obscurest rhapsodies had been among the best influences on Charles Lamb's life. A few months later he tried to put his regrets and his obligations into words. "When I heard of the death of Coleridge, it was without grief. It seemed to me that he had long been on the confines of the next world—that he had a hunger for eternity. I grieved then that I could not grieve; but since, I feel how great a part he was of me. His great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men or books, without an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all my cogitations."

The death of his friend was Charles Lamb's death-blow. There had been two persons in the world for whom he would have wished to live—Coleridge and his sister Mary. The latter was now for the greater part of each year worse than dead to him. The former was gone, and the blank left him helplessly alone. In conversation with friends he would suddenly exclaim, as if with surprise that aught else in the world should interest him, "Coleridge is dead!" And within five weeks of the day when

the touching tribute just cited was committed to paper, he was called to join his friend. One day in the middle of December, as he was taking his usual walk along the London Road, his foot struck against a stone, and he stumbled and fell, inflicting a slight wound on his face. For some days the injury appeared trifling, and on the 22nd of the month he writes a cheerful note to the wife of his old friend George Dyer, concerning the safety of a certain book belonging to Mr. Cary, which he had left at her house. On the same day, however, symptoms of erysipelas supervened, and it soon became evident that his general health was too feeble to resist the attack. From the first appearance of the disease the failure of life was so rapid that his intimate friends, Talfourd and Crabb Robinson, did not reach his bed-side in time for him to recognize them. The few words that escaped his lips while his mind was still unclouded, conveyed to those who watched him that he was undisturbed at the prospect of death. His sister was, happily for herself, in no state to feel or appreciate the blow that was falling. On the 27th of December, murmuring in his last moments the names of his dearest friends, he passed tranquilly out of life. "On the following Saturday his remains were laid in a deep grave in Edmonton churchyard, made in a spot which, about a fortnight before, he had pointed out to his sister on an afternoon wintry walk, as the place where he wished to be buried."

There is a touching fitness in the circumstance that Charles Lamb could not longer survive his earliest and dearest friend—that, trying it for a little while, "he liked it not—and died." It was a fitting comment on the circumstance, that that other great poet and thinker who next to Coleridge shared Lamb's deepest pride and affection, as

he looked back a year afterwards on the gaps that death had made in the ranks of those he loved, should have once more linked their names in imperishable verse :—

> Nor has the rolling year twice measured
> From sign to sign its steadfast course,
> Since every mortal power of Coleridge
> Was frozen at its marvellous source.
>
> The rapt one of the godlike forehead,
> The heaven-eyed creature, sleeps in earth :
> And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,
> Has vanished from his lonely hearth.

The friends of Lamb were not slow in giving expression to their sorrow for his loss, and their admiration of his character—Wordsworth and Landor in verse, Procter, Moxon, Forster, and many others through various channels, in prose. For the most part they had to deal in generalities, for Mary Lamb still lived, and the full extent of her brother's devotion and sacrifice could not yet be told. But abundant testimony was forthcoming that (to borrow Landor's words) he had left behind him that "worthier thing than tears,"

> The love of friends, without a single foe.

Wordsworth, in a beautiful tribute to his friend, begun with some view to an inscription for his grave, expressed no more than the verdict of all who knew him well, when he wrote,—

> Oh, he was good, if ever good man was.

And yet there must have been many of his old acquaintances who were startled at finding admiration for him thus expressed. Those who were not aware of the conditions of his life, or knew him only on his ordinary convivial side, regarded him, we are assured, as a flippant

talker, reckless indeed in speech, moody, and of uncertain temper. Few could know what Coleridge and Wordsworth and Southey knew so well, that with all his boastful renunciation of orthodoxy in belief, and his freedom of criticism on religious matters, he was one capable of feeling keenly both the sentiment and the principle of religious trust. There is ample evidence of this in those early letters written in the darkest hours of his life. And though the sentiment waned as a different class of associates gathered round him, and there were few at hand with whom to interchange his deeper thoughts, religion in him never died, but became a habit—a habit of enduring hardness, and cleaving to the steadfast performance of duty in face of the strongest allurements to the pleasanter and easier course. He set himself a task, one of the saddest and hardest that can be undertaken, to act as guardian and companion to one living always on the brink of insanity. For eight-and-thirty years he was faithful to this purpose, giving up everything for it, and never thinking that he had done enough, or could do enough, for his early friend, his "guardian angel."

It is noteworthy that those surface qualities of Charles Lamb by which so many were content to judge him, were just those which men are slow to connect with sterling goodness such as this. There was a certain Bohemianism in him, it must be allowed—a fondness for overmuch tobacco and gin-and-water, and for the company of those whom more particular people looked shy upon. He often fretted against the loss of time they caused him, but he was tolerant for the moment of what fed his sense of humour or fancy, and always of that which touched the "virtue of compassion" in him. He was free of speech, and not in the least afraid of shocking his company. And it seems a

natural inference that such traits betoken a hand-to-mouth existence, a certain want of moral backbone, irregularity in money matters, and the absence of any settled purpose. Yet it was for the opposite of all this that Lamb's life is so notable. He was well versed in poverty—for some years in marked degree—but he seems never to have exceeded his income, or to have been in debt. In the days of his most straitened means he was never so poor but that he had in reserve something to help those poorer than himself. His letters show this throughout; and as his own fortunes mended, his generosity in giving becomes truly surprising. "He gave away *greatly*," says his friend Mr. Procter, and goes on to relate how on one occasion when he was in low spirits, and Lamb imagined that it might proceed from pecuniary causes, he said suddenly, "My dear boy, I have a quantity of useless things—I have now in my desk a—a hundred pounds—that I don't *know* what to do with. Take it." In his more prosperous days he always had pensioners on his bounty. For many years he allowed his old schoolmistress thirty pounds a year. To a friend of Southey's, who was paralyzed, he paid ten pounds yearly; and when a subscription was raised for Godwin in his gravest difficulties, Lamb's contribution was the munificent one of fifty pounds. His letters too prove that he could always make the more difficult sacrifices of time and thought when others were in need. For a young lady establishing a school—for a poor fellow seeking an occasional clerkship in the India House—for such as these he is continually pleading and taking trouble. And before he knew that the directors of the India House intended to provide for his sister, in the event of her surviving him, on the footing of a wife, he had managed to put by a sufficient

sum to place her beyond the reach of want. At his death he left a sum of two thousand pounds, for his sister during her life, with a reversion to the child of their adoption, Emma Isola, then Mrs. Moxon.

Mary Lamb survived her brother nearly thirteen years, dying at the advanced age of 82, on the 20th of May, 1847. After the death of Charles, her health rallied sufficiently for her to visit occasionally among their old friends; but as years passed, her attacks became still more frequent, and of longer duration, till her mind became permanently enfeebled. After leaving Edmonton, she lived chiefly in St. John's Wood, under the care of a nurse. Her pension, together with the income from her brother's savings, was amply sufficient for her few needs.

"She will live for ever in the memory of her friends," writes that true and faithful friend, Crabb Robinson, "as one of the most amiable and admirable of women." From this verdict there is no dissentient voice. With much less from which to form a direct opinion than in her brother's case, we seem to read her character almost equally well. The tributes of her brother scattered through essay and letter, her own few but very significant letters, and her contributions to literature, show her strong and healthy common sense, her true womanliness, and her gift of keen and active sympathy. She shared with Charles a love of Quaker-like colour and homeliness in dress. "She wore a neat cap," Mr. Procter tells us, "of the fashion of her youth; an old-fashioned dress. Her face was pale and somewhat square, but very placid, with grey intelligent eyes. She was very mild in her manners to strangers; and to her brother, gentle and tender, always. She had often an upward look of peculiar meaning when directed towards him, as though to give

him assurance that all was then well with her." This unvarying manner, betokening mutual dependence and interest, was the feature that most impressed all who watched them together, her eyes often fixed on his as on "some adoring disciple," and ever listening to help his speech in some difficult word, and to anticipate the coming need. He in turn was always on the watch to detect any sign in her face of failing health or spirits, and to divert the conversation, if occasion arose, from any topic that might distress her or set up some dangerous excitement. Among the strange and motley guests that their hospitality brought around them, her own opinions and habits remained, with little danger of being shaken. "It has been the lot of my cousin," writes Lamb in the essay *Mackery End*, "oftener perhaps than I could have wished, to have had for her associates, and mine, free thinkers, leaders and disciples of novel philosophies and systems; but she neither wrangles with, nor accepts their opinions. That which was good and venerable to her when she was a child, retains its authority over her mind still. She never juggles or plays tricks with her understanding." It was this element of quietism in Mary Lamb that made her so inestimable a companion for her brother. She was strong where he was weak, and reposeful where he was so often ill at ease.

She was indeed fitted in all respects to be Charles Lamb's life-long companion. She shared his worthiest tastes, to the full. More catholic in her partialities than he, she devoured modern books as well as ancient with unfailing appetite, and had formed out of her reading a pure and idiomatic English style, with just a touch, as in everything else belonging to her, of an old-world formality. She possessed a distinct gift of humour, as her

portion of *Mrs. Leicester's School* amply shows. The story of the *Father's Wedding-day* has strokes of humour and observation not unworthy of Goldsmith. Landor used to rave, with characteristic vehemence, about this little sketch, and to declare that the incident of the child wishing, when dressed in her new frock, that her poor "mamma was alive, to see how fine she was on papa's wedding-day," was a masterpiece. The story called *The Young Mahometan* has a special interest as containing yet one more recollection of the old house at Blakesware. The medallions of the Twelve Cæsars, the Hogarth prints, and the tapestry hangings, are all there, together with that picturesque incident, which Charles elsewhere has not overlooked, of the broken battledore and shuttlecock telling of happy children's voices that had once echoed through the lonely chambers. It is certain that Charles and Mary, ardently as they both clung in after years to London sights and sounds, owed much both in genius and character to having breathed the purer, calmer air of rural homesteads.

A common education, whether that of sweet garden scenes, or the choice fancies and meditations of poet and moralist—a sense of mutual need—a profound pity for each other's frailties—of these was forged the bond that held them, and years of suffering and self-denial had made it ever more and more strong. "That we had much to struggle with, as we grew up together, we have reason to be most thankful. It strengthened and knit our compact closer. We could never have been what we have been to each other, if we had always had the sufficiency which you now complain of." It is with these words of divine philosophy that, when comparative ease had at last been achieved, Charles Lamb could look back upon the anxious past.

CHAPTER IX.

LAMB'S PLACE AS A CRITIC.

It remains to speak of those prose writings of Lamb, many of earlier date than the *Essays of Elia*, by which his quality as a critic must be determined. As early as 1811 he had published in Leigh Hunt's *Reflector* his essay on *The Genius and Character of Hogarth*. This was no subject taken up for the occasion. "His graphic representations," says Lamb, "are indeed books: they have the teeming, fruitful, suggestive meaning of *words*"—and no book was more familiar to him. A set of Hogarth's prints, including the *Harlot's* and *Rake's Progresses*, had been among the treasures of the old house at Blakesware; and Lamb as a child had spelled through their grim and ghastly histories again and again, till he came to know every figure and incident in them by heart. And now the cavalier tone in which certain leaders of the classical and historical schools of painting were wont to dismiss Hogarth as of slight value in point of art, made him keen to vindicate his old favourite. He has scant patience with those who noted defective drawing or "knowledge of the figure," in the artist. He is intolerant altogether of technical criticism. The essay is devoted to showing how true a moralist the painter is, and how false the view which would regard him chiefly as a humorist. He is a great satirist—a Juve-

nal or a Persius. Moreover, he is a combination of satirist and dramatist. Hogarth had claimed for his pictures that they should be judged as successive scenes in a play, and Lamb takes him at his word. He is carried away by admiration for the tragic power displayed. He is in ecstasies over the print of *Gin Lane*, certainly one of the poorest of Hogarth's pictures as a composition, losing its due effect by overcrowding of incident, and made grotesque through sheer exaggeration. Yet, what stirs the critic's heart is "the pity of it," and he is in no humour to admit other considerations. He calls it "a sublime print." "Every part is full of strange images of death; it is perfectly amazing and astounding to look at;" and so forth. It is noticeable that Lamb does not write with the pictures before him, and trusts to a memory not quite trustworthy. For example, to prove that Hogarth is not merely repulsive, that there is always a sweet humanity in reserve as a foil for the horrors he deals with—something to "keep the general air from tainting," he says: "Take the mild, supplicating posture of patient poverty, in the poor woman that is persuading the pawnbroker to accept her clothes in pledge in the plate of *Gin Lane*." There is really no such incident in the picture. There is a woman offering in pawn her kettle and fire-irons; but, taken in combination with all the other incidents of the scene, she is certainly pledging them to buy gin. Here, as elsewhere, Lamb damages his case by over-statement, partly through love of surprises, partly because he willingly discovered in poem or picture what he wished to find there. He sees more of humanity and sweetness in what affects him than is actually present. He *reads* something of himself into the composition he is reviewing. He is on safer ground when he dwells on the genuine power, the pity and the terror, in that last scene but

one of *The Marriage-à-la-Mode;* and on the gentleness of the wife's countenance, poetizing the whole scene, in the print of *The Distressed Poet.* And he is doing a service to art of larger scope than fixing the respective ranks of Hogarth and Poussin, in these noble concluding lines:—

> I say not that all the ridiculous subjects of Hogarth have necessarily something in them to make us like them; some are indifferent to us, some in their natures repulsive, and only made interesting by the wonderful skill and truth to nature in the painter; but I contend that there is in most of them that sprinkling of the better nature which, like holy water, chases away and disperses the contagion of the bad. They have this in them besides, that they bring us acquainted with the every-day human face; they give us skill to detect those gradations of sense and virtue (which escape the careless or fastidious observer) in the countenances of the world about us; and prevent that disgust at common life, that *tædium quotidianarum formarum*, which an unrestricted passion for ideal forms and beauties is in danger of producing.

His judgments of pictures are, as might be expected, those of a man of letters, not of a painter. It is the *story* in the picture that impresses him, and the technical qualities leave him unmoved. A curious instance of this is afforded in his essay on *The Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art.* After complaining that, with the exception of Hogarth, no artist within the last fifty years had treated a story *imaginatively*—"upon whom his subject has so acted that it has seemed to direct *him*, not to be arranged by him"—he breaks out into a fine rhapsody on the famous *Bacchus and Ariadne* of Titian in the National Gallery. But it is not as a masterpiece of colour and drawing that it excites his admiration. The qualities of the poet, not those of the painter, are what he discovers

in it. It is the "imaginative faculty" which he detects, as shown in the power of uniting the past and the present. "Precipitous, with his reeling satyr-rout around him, re-peopling and re-illuming suddenly the waste places, drunk with a new fury beyond the grape, Bacchus, born of fire, fire-like flings himself at the Cretan:" this is the *present*. Ariadne, "unconscious of Bacchus, or but idly casting her eyes as upon some unconcerning pageant, her soul undistracted from Theseus"—Ariadne, "pacing the solitary shore in as much heart-silence, and in almost the same local solitude, with which she awoke at day-break to catch the forlorn last glances of the sail that bore away the Athenian;" this is the *past*. But it is in the situation itself, not in Titian's treatment of it, that Lamb has found the antithesis that so delights him. He is in fact the poet, taking the subject out of the painter's hands, and treating it afresh. Lamb obtains an easy victory for the ancients over the moderns, by choosing as his foil for Titian and Raffaelle the treatment of sacred subjects by Martin, the painter of *Belshazzar's Feast* and *The Plains of Heaven*. And it is significant of a certain inability in Lamb to do full justice to his contemporaries, that in noting the barrenness of the fifty years in question in the matter of art, he has no exception to make but Hogarth. He might have had a word to say for Turner and Wilkie.

The essay on *The Artificial Comedy of the Last Century* has received more attention than its importance at all warrants, from the circumstance that Macaulay set to work seriously to demolish its reasoning, in reviewing Leigh Hunt's edition of the Restoration Dramatists. Lamb's essay was originally part of a larger essay upon the old actors, in which he was led to speak of the comedies of

Congreve and Wycherley, and the reasons why they no longer held the stage. His line of defence is well known. He protests that the world in which their characters move is so wholly artificial—a conventional world, quite apart from that of real life—that it is beside the mark to judge them by any moral standard. "They are a world of themselves almost as much as fairy-land." The apology is really (as Hartley Coleridge acutely points out) for those who, like himself, could enjoy the wit of these writers, without finding their actual judgment of moral questions at all influenced by it. It must be admitted that Lamb does not convince us of the sincerity of his reasoning, and probably he did not convince himself. He loved paradox; and he loved, moreover, to find some soul of goodness in things evil. As Hartley Coleridge adds, it was his way always to take hold of things "by the better handle."

The same love of paradox is manifest in the essay on *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, "considered with reference to their fitness for stage representation." If there are any positions which we should *not* expect to find Lamb disputing, they are the acting qualities of Shakespeare's plays, and the intellectual side of the actor's art. Yet these are what he devotes this paper to impugning. He had been much disgusted by the fulsome flattery contained in the epitaph on Garrick in Westminster Abbey. In this bombastic effusion, this "farrago of false thoughts and nonsense," as Lamb calls it, Garrick is put on a level with Shakespeare :—

> And till Eternity with power sublime
> Shall mark the mortal hour of hoary Time,
> Shakespeare and Garrick like twin-stars shall shine,
> And earth irradiate with a beam divine.

Why is it, asks Lamb, that "from the days of the

actor here celebrated to our own, it should have been the fashion to compliment every performer in his turn, that has had the luck to please the town in any of the great characters of Shakespeare, with the notion of possessing *a mind congenial with the poet's:* how people should come thus unaccountably to confound the power of originating poetical images and conceptions with the faculty of being able to read or recite the same when put into words?" And he goes on, in the same strain of contempt, to speak of the "low tricks upon the eye and ear," which the player can so easily compass, as contrasted with the "absolute mastery over the heart and soul of man, which a great dramatic poet possesses." No one knew better than Lamb, that the resources of the actor's art are not fairly or adequately stated in such language as this. He had himself the keenest relish for good acting, and no one has described and criticised it more finely. Witness his description of his favourite Munden, in the part of the Greenwich Pensioner, Old Dosey, and of Bensley's conception of the character of Malvolio. Or, again, take the exquisite passage in which he recalls Mrs. Jordan's performance of Viola: "There is no giving an account how she delivered the disguised story of her love for Orsino. It was no set speech, that she had foreseen, so as to weave it into a harmonious period, line necessarily following line to make up the music—yet I have heard it so spoken, or rather *read*, not without its grace and beauty; but when she had declared her sister's history to be a "blank," and that she "never told her love," there was a pause, as if the story had ended—and then the image of the "worm in the bud" came up as a new suggestion—and the heightened image of "Patience" still followed after that, as by some growing (and not mechanical) process, thought

springing up after thought, I would almost say, as they were watered by her tears." We are quite sure that the writer of these eloquent words did not seriously regard the art of acting as a mere succession of tricks "upon the eye and ear." He was for the moment prejudiced against the great actor—whom, by the way, he had never seen, Garrick having left the stage in 1776—by the injudicious language of his flatterers. But if we make due allowance for his outburst of spleen, we shall find much that is admirably true mixed up with it. Critics have often, for instance, insisted upon what is gained by seeing a drama acted, as distinguished from reading it, and Lamb here devotes himself to showing how far it is from being all gain. "It is difficult for a frequent play-goer to disembarrass the idea of Hamlet from the person and voice of Mr. Kemble. We speak of Lady Macbeth, while we are in reality thinking of Mrs. Siddons." We get distinctness, says Lamb, from seeing a character thus embodied, but "dearly do we pay" for this sense of distinctness.

This line of criticism leads up to the crowning paradox of this essay, that the plays of Shakespeare "are less calculated for performance on a stage than those of almost any other dramatist whatever." Here again it may be said that no one knew better than Lamb that in a most important sense these words are the very reverse of truth. There is no quality in which Shakespeare's greatness as a dramatist is more conspicuous than his knowledge of what is effective in stage representation. But Lamb chose to mean something very different from this. He was thinking of certain other qualities in the poet which are incommunicable by the medium of acting, and on these he proceeds to dwell, discussing for that purpose

the traditional stage rendering of Hamlet and other characters. He points out how the stage Hamlet almost always overdoes his scorn for Polonius, and his brutality to Ophelia, and asks the reason of this. It does not seem to occur to him that this is simply *bad* acting, and that it is not at all a necessary incident of the art that Hamlet's feelings should be thus represented. He seems to be confounding the limitations of the particular actor with those of his art. Indeed it is clear that many of the positions maintained in this paper are simply convenient opportunities for enlarging upon some character or conception of the great dramatist.

Lamb had a juster complaint against Garrick than that supplied by the words of a foolish epitaph. He boldly expresses a doubt whether the actor was capable of any real admiration for Shakespeare. Would any true lover of his plays, he asks, have "admitted into his matchless scenes such ribald trash" as Tate and Cibber and the rest had foisted into the acting versions of the dramas? Much of the scorn and indignation expressed by Lamb in this paper, becomes intelligible when we recall in what garbled shapes the dramatist was presented. Garrick himself had taken a prominent share in these alterations of the text. It was he who completely changed the last act of *Hamlet*, and turned the *Winter's Tale* into a piece of Arcadian insipidity. But the greatest outrage of all, in Lamb's view, would be Tate's version of Lear—in a modified edition of which Garrick himself had performed. In this version—which the editor of Bell's acting edition (1774) calls a "judicious blending" of Shakespeare and Tate—the character of the Fool is altogether omitted; Cordelia survives, and marries Edgar; and Lear, Kent, and Gloster announce their intention of retiring into

private life, to watch the happiness of the young couple, Lear himself bringing down the curtain with these amazing lines :—

> Thou, Kent, and I, retired from noise and strife,
> Will calmly pass our short reserves of time
> In cool reflections on our fortunes past,
> Cheered with relation of the prosperous reign
> Of this celestial pair; thus our remains
> Shall in an even course of thoughts be past,
> Enjoy the present hour, nor fear the last.

This was the stuff which in Lamb's day the actors and their audience were content to accept as the work of the Master-hand. It may well account for a tone of bitterness, and even of exaggeration, that pervades the essay. It is some compensation that it drew from Lamb his noble vindication of Shakespeare's original. The passage is well known, but I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting it once again :—

> The Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements, than any actor can be to represent Lear; they might more easily propose to personate the Satan of Milton upon a stage, or one of Michael Angelo's terrible figures. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual; the explosions of his passion are terrible as a volcano; they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seems too insignificant to be thought on: even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage: while we read it, we see not Lear, but we *are* Lear, we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms; in the aberrations of his reason we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, im-

methodized from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. What have looks or tones to do with that sublime identification of his age with that of the *heavens themselves*, when in his reproaches to them for conniving at the injustice of his children, he reminds them that "they themselves are old?" What gestures shall we appropriate to this? What has the voice or the eye to do with such things? But the play is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show: it is too hard and stony; it must have love-scenes, and a happy ending. It is not enough that Cordelia is a daughter; she must shine as a lover too. Tate has put his hook in the nostrils of this Leviathan, for Garrick and his followers, the showmen of the scene, to draw the mighty beast about more easily. A happy ending!—as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through, the flaying of his feelings alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. If he is to live and be happy after, if he could sustain this world's burden after, why all this pudder and preparation—why torment us with all this unnecessary sympathy? as if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused station—as if, at his years, and with his experience, anything was left but to die.

No passage in Lamb's writings is better fitted than this to illustrate his peculiar power as a commentator. It as little suggests Hazlitt or Coleridge, as it does Schlegel or Gervinus. It is more remote still—it need hardly be added—from the fantastic tricks of a later day, which are doing all they can to make Shakespearian criticism hideous. Lamb's emphatic vindication of the course of events in Shakespeare's tragedy of course implies a criticism and a commendation of the dramatist. But no one feels that he is either patronizing, or judging, Shakespeare. He takes Lear, as it were, out of the hands of literature, and regards him as a human being placed in the world

where all men have to suffer and be tempted. We forget that he is a character in a play, or even in history. Lamb's criticism is a commentary on life, and no truer homage could be paid to the dramatist than that he should be allowed for the time to pass out of our thoughts.

Thoroughly characteristic of Lamb is the admirable paper on *The Sanity of True Genius*, suggested by Dryden's famous line as to "great wit" being nearly allied to madness. It aims to disprove this, and to show that, on the contrary, the greatest wits "will ever be found to be the sanest writers." He illustrates this by the use that Shakespeare and others make of the supernatural persons and situations in their writings. "Caliban, the Witches, are as true to the laws of their own nature (ours with a difference) as Othello, Hamlet, and Macbeth. Herein the great and the little wits are differenced: that if the latter wander ever so little from nature or actual existence, they lose themselves and their readers." And with a marvellous semblance of paradox, which yet is felt to be profoundly true, he proceeds to declare that in Spenser's Episode of the "Cave of Mammon," where the Money-God, and his daughter Ambition and Pilate washing his hands—the most discordant persons and situations—are introduced, the controlling power of the poet's sanity makes the whole more actually consistent, than the characters and situations of every-day life in the latest novel from the Minerva Press. It is a proof, he says, "of that hidden sanity which still guides the poet in his wildest seeming aberrations." No detached sentences can, however, convey an idea of this splendid argument. Nothing that Lamb has written proves more decisively how large a part the higher imagination plays

in true criticism; nothing better illustrates the truth of Butler's claim, that

> The poet must be tried by his peers,
> And not by pedants and philosophers.

That Lamb was a poet is at the root of his greatness as a critic; and his own judgments of poetry show the same sanity to which he points in his poetical brethren. He is never so impulsive or discursive that he fails to show how unerring is his judgment on all points connected with the poet's art. There had been those before Lamb, for example, who had quoted and called attention to the poetry of George Wither; but no one had thought of noticing that his metre was also that of Ambrose Philips, and that Pope and his friends had only proved their own defective ear by seeking to make it ridiculous. "To the measure in which these lines are written, the wits of Queen Anne's days contemptuously gave the name of Namby-Pamby, in ridicule of Ambrose Philips, who has used it in some instances, as in the lines on Cuzzoni, to my feeling at least very deliciously; but Wither, whose darling measure it seems to have been, may show that in skilful hands it is capable of expressing the subtlest movement of passion. So true it is, what Drayton seems to have felt, that it is the poet who modifies the metre, not the metre the poet."

It was in the margin of a copy of Wither's poems that this exquisite comment was originally made; and in such a casual way did much of Lamb's finest criticism come into being. All through his life, in letter and essay, he was making remarks of this kind, throwing them out by the way, never thinking that they would be hereafter treasured up as the most luminous and penetrative judg-

ments of the century. And it may well be asked why, with such a range of sympathy, from Marlowe to Ambrose Philips, from Sir T. Browne to Sir William Temple, he was so limited, so one-sided in his estimate of the literature of his own age? It is true that he was among the first in England to appreciate Burns and Wordsworth. But to Scott, Byron, and Shelley he entertained a feeling almost of aversion. He was glad (as we gather from the Essay on *The Sanity of True Genius*) that "a happier genius" had arisen to expel the "innutritious phantoms" of the Minerva Press; but the success of the Waverley Novels seems to have caused him amusement rather than any other feeling. About Byron, he wrote to Joseph Cottle, "I have a thorough aversion to his character, and a very moderate admiration of his genius: he is great in so little a way. To be a poet is to be the man, not a petty portion of occasional low passion worked up in a permanent form of humanity." Shelley's poetry, he told Barton he did not understand, and that it was "thin sown with profit or delight." When he read Goethe's *Faust* (of course in an English version), he at once pronounced it inferior to Marlowe's in the chief *motive* of the plot, and was evidently content to let criticism end there. Something of this may be ascribed to a jealousy in Lamb —a strange and needless jealousy for his own loved writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and a fear lest the new comers should usurp some of the praise and renown that he claimed for them; something, also, to a perverseness in him which made him like to be in opposition to the current opinion, whatever it might be. He was often unwilling, rather than unable, to discuss the claims of a new candidate for public favour. He lived mainly in communion with an older literature. It was to

him inexhaustible in amount and in excellence, and he was impatient of what sought to divert his attention from it. It was literally true of him that "when a new book came out—he read an old one."

But even of the old ones, the classics of our literature, it was not easy to say what his opinion in any case would be. For instance, he was a great admirer of Smollett, and was with great difficulty brought to admit the superiority of Fielding. And in the work of a greater humorist than Smollett, in the Picaresque school—*Gil Blas*—he would not acknowledge any merit at all. The truth is that for Lamb to enjoy a work of humour, it must embody a strong human interest, or at least have a pulse of humanity throbbing through it. Humour, without pity or tenderness, only repelled him. It was another phase of the same quality in him that—as we have seen in his estimate of Byron—where he was not drawn to the *man*, he was almost disabled from admiring, or even understanding, the man's work. Had he ever come face to face with the author for a single evening, the result might have been quite different.

There is no difficulty, therefore, in detecting the limitations of Lamb as a critic. In a most remarkable degree he had the defects of his qualities. Where his heart was, there his judgment was sound. Where he actively disliked, or was passively indifferent, his critical powers remained dormant. He was too fond of paradox, too much at the mercy of his emotions or the mood of the hour, to be a safe guide always. But where no disturbing forces interfered, he exercised a faculty almost unique in the history of criticism. When Southey heard of his *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets*, he wrote to Coleridge: "If co-operative labour were as practicable as

it is desirable, what a history of English literature might he and you and I set forth!" Such an enterprise would be, as Southey saw, all but impossible; but if the spiritual insight of Coleridge, and the unwearied industry and sober common-sense of Southey, could be combined with the special genius of Charles Lamb, something like the ideal commentary on English literature might be the result.

As it is, Lamb's contribution to that end is of the rarest value. If it is too much to say that he singly revived the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is because we see clearly that that revival was coming, and would have come even without his help. But he did more than recall attention to certain forgotten writers. He flashed a light from himself upon them, not only heightening every charm and deepening every truth, but making even their eccentricities beautiful and lovable. And in doing this he has linked his name for ever with theirs. When we think of "the sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention,—Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley"—then the thought of Charles Lamb will never be far off. His name, too, has a perfume in the mention. "There are some reputations," wrote Southey to Caroline Bowles, "which will not keep, but Lamb's is not of that kind. His memory will retain its fragrance as long as the best spice that ever was expended upon one of the Pharaohs."

INDEX.

Acting, Lamb on, 177 *seq.*
Addison, 108
Adventures of Telemachus (Fénelon's), 68
Adventures of Ulysses, 69
Albion, The, 51, 52, 102
Album Verses, 161
All Fools' Day, 110
Amicus Redivivus, 128
Anti-Jacobin, Lamb ridiculed in the, 56
A Very Woman (Massinger's), 35, 36

Barbara S., 120
Barton, Bernard, 68, 110, 129, 135, 143, 145, 149, 153
Battle of Blenheim (Southey's), 45
Beaumont and Fletcher, 36, 55, 57
Bigod, Ralph, 102
Biographia Literaria (Coleridge's), 10
Bird, William (Lamb's first schoolmaster), 4, 5
Blakesmoor in H——shire, 113 *seq.*, 143
Blakesware, 2, 20, 21, 25
Books and Reading, 37
Bowles, William Lisle, 13, 14, 15, 35, 38
Boyer, Rev. James (Lamb's teacher at Christ's Hospital), 10, 12, 15
Browne, Sir Thomas, influence of his writing on Lamb, 110
Burney, Martin, 89
Burns, 15, 35, 45, 105

Cambridge, 50, 142, 143
Captain Jackson, 121
Carlyle, his impressions of Lamb, 79
Cary, Henry, 6, 163, 165
Chapman's translation of the *Odyssey*, Lamb on, 68
Christ's Hospital, 7-16; Coleridge's account of discipline at, 10, 11; Leigh Hunt's description of, 15, 16
Coleridge, 6, 8, 10, 14, 15, 19, 23, 26, 35, 37, 41, 46, 52, 53, 56, 58, 70, 73, 163, 164
Coleridge, Hartley, 100, 176
Complete Angler (Walton's), 36
Confessions of a Drunkard, 121, 122
Confessions (Rousseau's), Lamb fascinated by, 36
Congreve's comedies, 176
Crossley, Mr. James, his recollections of Lamb, 75 *seq.*

Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis The, 103
De Quincey, 122
Dissertation on Roast Pig, 104
Distant Correspondents, 120
Dream Children, 117
Dyer, George, 52, 128, 165

East India Company, 22, 145, 147
Edinburgh Review, 56
Edward the Second (Marlowe's), 39
"Elia": origin of the *nom de plume*, 101
Englishman's Magazine, Lamb's contributions to the, 161
Essays of Elia, their matter largely personal, 101, 102; their style, 103, 106, 109; mastery of English displayed in them, 103; extracts, 103, 106, 113, 118; the two most famous essays, 104; the employment of quotation in them, 106; their pleasant egotism, 108, 123; the influence of other writers apparent in them, 108, 111; their biographical value, 111; their discursiveness, 123; the secret of their charm, 123; the second series, 129; Southey on their want of religious feeling, 130
Every Day Books (Hone's), 153
Excursion (Wordsworth's), 135

Farewell to Tobacco, 98
Father's Wedding Day (Mary Lamb's), 171
Faust (Goethe's), 184
Field, Elizabeth (Lamb's mother), 2
Field, Mrs. Mary (Lamb's grandmother), 20, 21
Fielding, 185
Fletcher, 54, 72
Forster, 163

Garrick, 176, 178, 179
Gil-Blas, 185
Godwin, William, 57, 66
Grace before Meat, 106
Grandame, The, 21, 106

Haydon, 85 *seq.*
Hazlitt, William, 60, 65, 66, 73, 109, 137
Hogarth, Genius and Character of, 98, 172
Hone, 153
Hunt, Leigh, 15, 16, 74, 137
Hunt, Thornton, "T. H.," 131

Imperfect Sympathies, 104, 133
Influence of Time on Grief (Bowles's), 14
Islington, Lamb's garden at, 141, 142
Isola, Miss Emma, 143, 161, 162

Jordan, Mrs., in the part of "Viola," 177

Kemble, John, 53, 54, 178
Keswick, the Lambs at, 58

Lamb, Charles, parentage, 2; education under Mr. Bird, 4; poverty of his childhood, 4; goes to Christ's Hospital, 5; his school life, 7-9; beginning of his friendship with Coleridge, 8; he is made deputy Grecian, 9; his classical attainments, 9, 10, 68; Coleridge's great influence over him, 11; he leaves Christ's Hospital, 15; family struggles and sorrows, 16 *seq.*; he obtains a post in South Sea House, 22; is promoted to clerkship in East India Company, 22; his holidays and theatre-going, 22, 23; his first appearance in print, 24; his first love, 24, 25; he succumbs to the family malady of insanity, 26; writes the lines "To my Sister," 26; his sister's terrible outbreak of madness, 27; his mother's death, 27; Lamb's account of the calamity, 28 *seq.*; his experiments in literature, 34 *seq.*; "motto" to his first published poems, 36; he makes new friends, 37; his poems introduced to the world by Coleridge, 37; he writes the *Tale of Rosamund Gray*, 38; he visits Coleridge at Nether

Stowey, 41 ; his strained relations with Coleridge, 42 ; he writes the verses on "the old familiar faces," 43 ; his friendship with Lloyd and Southey, 44, 45 ; his reconciliation with Coleridge, 46 ; his sister's frequent attacks of madness, 46 ; their "marked" life, 47 ; he moves into lodgings in the Temple, 48 ; his passionate love of London, 48 ; his friendship with Manning, 50, 51 ; he contributes to the *Morning Post*, 51 ; sends his first drama to Kemble, 53 ; its fate, 54 ; its publication, 55 ; he visits the Lake country, 58 ; is delighted with the scenery, 58, 59 ; he returns to London, 59 ; resolves to lead a more sober life, 59 ; his "frailty," 60 ; his fits of depression, 60, 61 ; he begins to write a farce, 61 ; his love for Hester Savary, 63 ; he gives up smoking, 64 ; completes his farce, 64 ; its production on the stage, 65 ; he joins in hissing it, 65 ; writes the *Tales from Shakespeare* with his sister, 66 ; their publication and success, 67 ; the Lambs' Wednesday evenings, 88 ; his literary friends, 88, 94 ; his sister's relapses, 94 ; he takes lodgings near Covent Garden, 96 ; amusing description of their surroundings, 96 ; complains of the number of his visitors, 97 ; brings out a complete collection of his works, 98 ; contributes to the *London Magazine*, 100 ; appearance of the *Essays of Elia*, 101 ; death of his brother, 117 ; goes to Paris with his sister, 126 ; meets Talma, the tragedian, 127 ; his controversy with Southey, 135 ; he vindicates his friendship for Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, 137 ; his reconciliation with Southey, 140 ; he moves to Islington, 141 ; adoption of Emma Isola, 143 ; he retires from the East India Company on a handsome pension, 147 ; his faithful service, 148 ; the value to Lamb of regular occupation, 148 ; his life of independence, 150 *seq.* ; he works every day at the British Museum, 153 ; takes to lodgings again, 159 ; contributes to the *Englishman's Magazine*, 161 ; his grief at Coleridge's death, 164 ; has an accident, 165 ; his death, 165 ; tributes to his memory, 166

Appreciation of English rural scenery, 21 ; Bohemianism, 167 ; conduct under the influence of wine, 78 ; descriptions of himself, 80-82, 134 ; generosity, 168 ; gentleness, 6, 77 ; high animal spirits, 87, 90 ; humanity and sympathy, 46, 124, 155, 168, 185 ; impediment of speech, 6, 15 ; indolence, 143, 144 ; irritability, 155 ; love of animals, 45 ; love for his sister Mary, 19, 30 *seq.*, 61, 62, 94, 95 ; love of tobacco, 82 ; love of theatre, 22 ; oddities, 78 ; patient cheerfulness, 65 ; punning, 80, 81, 82, 83 ; "purity of heart," 69 ; religious feelings, 21, 38, 130, 134, 135, 167 ; sedateness of manner and dress, 16 ; smile, 75-77 ; shyness, 77 ; tender love for children, 138 ; terror of servants, 78 ; unmusical ear, 102 ; various descriptions of him, 6, 16, 75, 76, 77, 79 ; best portrait of Lamb, 76

Acquaintance with the earlier English authors, 35, 184, 186 ; deficiencies as a playwright, 54, 65, 66 ; first essays mainly imitative, 37 ; great powers of

criticism, 45, 69, 70, 71, 99, 172-185 ; happy use of familiar quotations, 84 ; humour tinged with sadness, 46 ; love of paradox, 176, 182, 185 ; power as a commentator, 181 ; style, 103, 106, 109 ; varied reading, 36
Lamb, John (brother), 2, 17, 18, 30, 31, 117
Lamb, John (father), 2, 4, 22, 32
Lamb, Mary, her taste for reading, 19 ; early signs of insanity, 19 ; her frequent outbreaks, 27, 33, 46, 94, 128, 159, 162 ; her clear-sighted wisdom, 61 ; her part in *Tales from Shakespeare*, 66, 67 ; her literary qualifications, 67 ; her death, 169 ; description of her, 169 ; tributes to her memory, 169 ; her tender solicitude for her brother, 170 ; her style, 170 ; her 'gift of humour, 171
Last Essays of Elia, 163
"Lear," Lamb's criticism of the character of, 180
Le Grice, Charles Valentine, 6, 15
Lessing, 71
Letters, Lamb's, 26, 28, 46, 47, 52, 53, 58, 59, 90, 94, 96, 97, 101, 135, 140, 141, 143, 145, 149, 151, 153, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 162
Letter of Elia to Robert Southey, Esq., 136
Lloyd, Charles, 37, 38, 42
London Magazine, 22, 99, 142, 157
"Lovel," Lamb's description of his father under this name, 2, 3

Mackery End in Hertfordshire, 17, 20, 102
Macready, 80
Manning, 47, 50, 53, 58, 63, 66, 69, 90
Marvell, 110, 123
Massinger, 54, 55
Merry Devil of Edmonton (Brewer's), 71
Middleton, 71
Milton, 109, 110, 123
Monthly Magazine, 35
Morning Chronicle, 23, 52
Morning Post, 51, 52, 60
Moxon, 143, 158, 162
Mr. H. (Lamb's farce), 64 ; its production, 65 ; its flimsiness, 65 ; its reception, 65 ; its poor humour, 66 ; its laboured dialogue, 66 ; its lack of constructive ability, 66
Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist, 102
Mrs. Leicester's School, 94, 171
My First Play, 23
My Relations, 17, 18, 102

Newspapers Thirty-five Years Ago, 51
Newton, Sir Isaac, 86
New Year's Eve, 111
Norris, Mr. Randal, 21, 153

Odyssey, Lamb's abridgment of the, 68
Old Benchers of the Inner Temple 2, 102
Old China, 111, 129
Old Margate Hoy, 129
Ollier, Charles, 98
On Ears, 102
On Some of the Old Actors, 120
Oxford in the Vacation, 102, 123

Paris, the Lambs' visit to, 126
Patmore, 76, 77, 151 ; description of Lamb by, 79
Père-la-Chaise, Lamb's impressions of, 127
Peter's Net, 161
Poetical Epistle to Elia, 134
Poetry for Children, 94
Poor Relations, 129
Popular Fallacies, 154
Praise of Chimney-sweepers, 85
Pride's Cure, 53
Progress of Infidelity (Southey's article in *Quarterly Review*), 130

Quakers' Meeting, 145
Quarterly Review, 121, 129, 135, 140

Recollections of Christ's Hospital, 7
Recollections of the South Sea House, 22, 100, 103
Reflector, Lamb's contributions to Leigh Hunt's, 94
Religio Medici, the, 110, 111, 133
Roast Pig. Dissertation on, 104
Robinson, Crabb, 51, 65, 84, 127, 169
Rosamund Gray, the secret of its charm, 38, 41; story of, 39; Lamb and his sister portrayed in, 39; the actual counterpart of, 40; Shelley's opinion of it, 41

Salt, Mr. Samuel, 2, 5, 19, 22, 35
Sanity of True Genius, 182
Savary, Hester, lines on, 63
Shakespeare, 67, 72, 176, 178
Shakespeare's Tragedies, 99, 176
Shakespearian criticism, 120, 180 *seq.*
Shelley, his delight in Lamb's writings, 41
Siddons, Mrs., 23, 24, 178
Smollett, Lamb a great admirer of, 185
South Sea House, Recollections of the, 22, 100, 103
Southey, 34, 37, 41, 53, 56, 130, 135, 140
Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, 69-73; its method of commentary, 69; principles of selection in, 69; boldness of the undertaking, 70; its unity of treatment, 71; its influence on the poetical renascence of the last century, 73
Spider, Ode to a (Southey's), 45
Steele, 108, 109
Stuart, Daniel, 51, 53
Stoddart, Miss (Hazlitt's wife), 60
Superannuated Man, 129, 146

Tales from Shakespeare, manner in which they were written, 67, their simplicity and purity of style, 67; rare critical faculty shown in them, 67; the best introduction to the study of Shakespeare, 67; the Lambs' special qualifications for the work, 67; their great success, 67, 68
Talfourd, Thomas, 9, 57, 74, 75 78
Talfourd's Memorials, 136
Talma (French tragedian), 127, 128
Temple, Lamb's recollection of the, 1; influence of its surroundings on him, 15
"T. H." (Thornton Hunt), 130, 131, 137; lines to, 138
"Tipp, John," 103
Tombs of the Abbey, 136
Two Races of Men, 52, 102

Vision of Repentance, 38

Wedding, 108
Witches and other Night-fears, 5, 130
Woodvil, John, 53-56; deficient in constructive skill, 54; its crude character-drawing, 54; its incongruity of diction, 54; want of keeping in the dialogue, 54; well-known lines from, 54; its publication, 55; its chief interest, 55; criticism in the *Edinburgh Review*, 56
Wordsworth, 6, 21, 35, 48; dinner in his honour (Lamb's behaviour at), 86-88; his tribute to Lamb's memory, 166
Wycherley's comedies, 176

Young Mahometan, The, 171

Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

ADDISON

ADDISON

BY

W. J. COURTHOPE

London
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1903

All rights reserved

ADDISON

BY

W. J. COURTHOPE

London
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1903

All rights reserved

First Edition 1884
Reprinted 1889, 1898, 1903

CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.

THE STATE OF ENGLISH SOCIETY AND LETTERS AFTER THE RESTORATION 1

CHAPTER II.

ADDISON'S FAMILY AND EDUCATION 22

CHAPTER III.

ADDISON ON HIS TRAVELS 40

CHAPTER IV.

HIS EMPLOYMENT IN AFFAIRS OF STATE 55

CHAPTER V.

THE "TATLER" AND "SPECTATOR" 81

CHAPTER VI.

"CATO" 115

PAGE

CHAPTER VII.

ADDISON'S QUARREL WITH POPE 131

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST YEARS OF HIS LIFE 146

CHAPTER IX.

THE GENIUS OF ADDISON 161

INDEX 193

ADDISON.

CHAPTER I.

THE STATE OF ENGLISH SOCIETY AND LETTERS AFTER THE RESTORATION.

Of the four English men of letters whose writings most fully embody the spirit of the eighteenth century the one who provides the biographer with the scantiest materials is Addison. In his *Journal to Stella*, his social verses, and his letters to his friends, we have a vivid picture of those relations with women and that protracted suffering which invest with such tragic interest the history of Swift. Pope, by the publication of his own correspondence, has enabled us, in a way that he never intended, to understand the strange moral twist which distorted a nature by no means devoid of noble instincts. Johnson was fortunate in the companionship of perhaps the best biographer who ever lived. But of the real life and character of Addison scarcely any contemporary record remains. The formal narrative prefixed to his works by Tickell is, by that writer's own admission, little more than a bibliography. Steele, who might have told us more than any man about his boyhood and his manner of life in London, had become estranged from his old friend

before his death. No writer has taken the trouble to preserve any account of the wit and wisdom that enlivened the "little senate" at Button's. His own letters are, as a rule, compositions as finished as his papers in the *Spectator*. Those features in his character which excite the greatest interest have been delineated by the hand of an enemy—an enemy who possessed an unrivalled power of satirical portrait-painting, and was restrained by no regard for truth from creating in the public mind such impressions about others as might serve to heighten the favourable opinion of himself.

This absence of dramatic incident in Addison's life would lead us naturally to conclude that he was deficient in the energy and passion which cause a powerful nature to leave a mark upon its age. Yet such a judgment would certainly be erroneous. Shy and reserved as he was, the unanimous verdict of his most illustrious contemporaries is decisive as to the respect and admiration which he excited among them. The man who could exert so potent an influence over the mercurial Steele; who could fascinate the haughty and cynical intellect of Swift; whose conversation, by the admission of his satirist Pope, had in it something more charming than that of any other man; of whom it was said that he might have been chosen king if he wished it; such a man, though to the coarse perception of Mandeville he might have seemed no more than "a parson in a tye-wig," can hardly have been deficient in force of character.

Nor would it have been possible for a writer distinguished by mere elegance and refinement to leave a lasting impress on the literature and society of his country. In one generation after another men, repre-

senting opposing elements of rank, class, interest, and taste, have agreed in acknowledging Addison's extraordinary merits. "Whoever wishes," says Johnson—at the end of a biography strongly coloured with the prepossessions of a semi-Jacobite Tory—"whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison." "Such a mark of national respect," says Macaulay, the best representative of middle-class opinion in the present century, speaking of the statue erected to Addison in Westminster Abbey, "was due to the unsullied statesman, to the accomplished scholar, to the master of pure English eloquence, to the consummate painter of life and manners. It was due, above all, to the great satirist who alone knew how to use ridicule without abusing it; who, without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform, and who reconciled wit and virtue, after a long and disastrous separation, during which wit had been led astray by profligacy and virtue by fanaticism."

This verdict of a great critic is accepted by an age to which the grounds of it are perhaps not very apparent. The author of any ideal creation—a poem, a drama, or a novel—has an imprescriptible property in the fame of his work. But to harmonise conflicting social elements, to bring order out of chaos in the sphere of criticism, to form right ways of thinking about questions of morals, taste, and breeding, are operations of which the credit, though it is certainly to be ascribed to particular individuals, is generally absorbed by society itself. Macaulay's eulogy is as just as it is eloquent, but the pages of the *Spectator* alone will hardly show the reader

why Addison should be so highly praised for having reconciled wit with virtue. Nor, looking at him as a critic, will it appear a great achievement to have pointed out to English society the beauties of *Paradise Lost*, unless it be remembered that the taste of the preceding generation still influenced Addison's contemporaries, and that in that generation Cowley was accounted a greater poet than Milton.

To estimate Addison at his real value we must regard him as the chief architect of Public Opinion in the eighteenth century. But here again we are met by an initial difficulty, because it has become almost a commonplace of contemporary criticism to represent the eighteenth century as a period of sheer destruction. It is tacitly assumed by a school of distinguished philosophical writers that we have arrived at a stage in the world's history in which it is possible to take a positive and scientific view of human affairs. As it is of course necessary that from such a system all belief in the supernatural shall be jealously excluded, it has not seemed impossible to write the history of Thought itself in the eighteenth century. And in tracing the course of this supposed continuous stream it is natural that all the great English writers of the period should be described as in one way or another helping to pull down, or vainly to strengthen, the theological barriers erected by centuries of bigotry against the irresistible tide of enlightened progress.

It would be of course entirely out of place to discuss here the merits of this new school of history. Those who consider that, whatever glimpses we may obtain of the law and order of the universe, man is, as he always

has been and always will be, a mystery to himself, will hardly allow that the operations of the human spirit can be traced in the dissecting-room. But it is, in any case, obvious that to treat the great *imaginative* writers of any age as if they were only mechanical agents in an evolution of thought is to do them grave injustice. Such writers are above all things creative. Their first aim is to "show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." No work of the eighteenth century, composed in a consciously destructive spirit, has taken its place among the acknowledged classics of the language. Even the *Tale of a Tub* is to be regarded as a satire upon the aberrations of theologians from right reason, not upon the principles of Christianity itself. The *Essay on Man* has, no doubt, logically a tendency towards Deism, but nobody ever read the poem for the sake of its philosophy; and it is well known that Pope was much alarmed when it was pointed out to him that his conclusions might be represented as incompatible with the doctrines of revealed religion.

The truth indeed seems to be the exact converse of what is alleged by the scientific historians. So far from the eighteenth century in England being an age of destructive analysis, its energies were chiefly devoted to political, social, and literary reconstruction. Whatever revolution in faith and manners the English nation had undergone had been the work of the two preceding centuries, and, though the historic foundations of society remained untouched, the whole form of the superstructure had been profoundly modified.

"So tenacious are we," said Burke towards the close of the last century, "of our old ecclesiastical modes and fashions

of institution that very little change has been made in them since the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, adhering in this particular as in all else to our old settled maxim never entirely nor at once to depart from antiquity. We found these institutions on the whole favourable to morality and discipline, and we thought they were susceptible of amendment without altering the ground. We thought they were capable of receiving and meliorating and, above all, of preserving the accessories of science and literature as the order of Providence should successively produce them. And after all, with this Gothic and monkish education (for such it is the groundwork), we may put in our claim to as ample and early a share in all the improvements in science, in arts, and in literature which have illuminated the modern world as any other nation in Europe. We think one main cause of this improvement was our not despising the patrimony of knowledge which was left us by our forefathers."

All this is, in substance, true of our political as well as our ecclesiastical institutions. And yet, when Burke wrote, the great feudal and mediæval structure of England had been so transformed by the Wars of the Roses, the Reformation, the Rebellion, and the Revolution, that its ancient outlines were barely visible. In so far, therefore, as his words seem to imply that the social evolution he describes was produced by an imperceptible and almost mechanical process of national instinct, the impression they tend to create is entirely erroneous.

If we have been hitherto saved from such corruption as undermined the republics of Italy, from the religious wars that so long enfeebled and divided Germany, and from the Revolution that has severed modern France from her ancient history, thanks for this are due partly no doubt to favouring conditions of nature and society, but quite as much to the genius of great individuals who prepared the mind of the nation for the gradual assimila-

tion of new ideas. Thus Langland and Wycliffe and their numerous followers, long before the Reformation, had so familiarised the minds of the people with their ideas of the Christian religion that the Sovereign was able to assume the Headship of the Church without the shock of a social convulsion. Fresh feelings and instincts grew up in the hearts of whole classes of the nation without at first producing any change in outward habits of life, and even without arousing a sense of their logical incongruity. These mixed ideas were constantly brought before the imagination in the works of the poets. Shakespeare abounds with passages in which, side by side with the old feudal, monarchical, catholic, and patriotic instincts of Englishmen, we find the sentiments of the Italian Renaissance. Spenser conveys Puritan doctrines sometimes by the mouth of shepherds, whose originals he had found in Theocritus and Virgil; sometimes under allegorical forms derived from books of chivalry and the ceremonial of the Catholic Church. Milton, the most rigidly Calvinistic of all the English poets in his opinions, is also the most severely classical in his style.

It was the task of Addison to carry on the reconciling traditions of our literature. It is his praise to have accomplished his task under conditions far more difficult than any that his predecessors had experienced. What they had done was to give instinctive and characteristic expression to the floating ideas of the society about them; what Addison and his contemporaries did was to found a public opinion by a conscious effort of reason and persuasion. Before the Civil Wars there had been at least no visible breach in the principle of Authority

in Church and State. At the beginning of the eighteenth century constituted authority had been recently overthrown; one king had been beheaded, another had been expelled; the Episcopalian form of Church Government had been violently displaced in favour of the Presbyterian, and had been with almost equal violence restored. Whole classes of the population had been drawn into opposing camps during the Civil War, and still stood confronting each other with all the harsh antagonism of sentiment inherited from that conflict. Such a bare summary alone is sufficient to indicate the nature of the difficulties Addison had to encounter in his efforts to harmonise public opinion; but a more detailed examination of the state of society after the Restoration is required to place in its full light the extraordinary merits of the success that he achieved.

There was, to begin with, a vehement opposition between town and country. In the country the old ideas of Feudalism, modified by circumstances, but vigorous and deep-rooted, still prevailed. True, the military system of land-tenure had disappeared with the Restoration, but it was not so with the relations of life and the habits of thought and feeling which the system had created. The features of surviving Feudalism have been inimitably preserved for us in the character of Sir Roger de Coverley. Living in the patriarchal fashion, in the midst of tenants and retainers, who looked up to him as their chief, and for whose welfare and protection he considered himself responsible, the country gentleman valued above all things the principle of Loyalty. To the monied classes in the towns he was instinctively opposed; he regarded their interests, both social and

commercial, as contrary to his own; he looked with dislike and suspicion on the economical principles of government and conduct on which these classes naturally rely. Even the younger sons of county families had in Addison's day abandoned the custom, common enough in the feudal times, of seeking their fortune in trade. Many a Will Wimble now spent his whole life in the country, training dogs for his neighbours, fishing their streams, making whips for their young heirs, and even garters for their wives and daughters.[1]

The country gentlemen were confirmed in these ideas by the difficulties of communication. During his visit to Sir Roger de Coverley the *Spectator* observed the extreme slowness with which fashions penetrated into the country; and he noticed, too, that party spirit was much more violent there than in the towns. The learning of the clergy, many of whom resided with the country squires as chaplains, was of course enlisted on the Tory side, and supplied it with arguments which the body of the party might perhaps have found it difficult to discover, or at least to express, for themselves. For Tory tastes undoubtedly lay generally rather in the direction of sport than of books. Sir Roger seems to be as much above the average level of his class as Squire Western is certainly below it: perhaps the Tory fox-hunter of the *Freeholder*, though somewhat satirically painted, is a fair representative of the society which had its headquarters at the October Club, and whose favourite poet was Tom D'Urfey.

The commercial and professional classes, from whom the Whigs derived their chief support, of course

[1] *Spectator*, No. 108.

predominated in the towns, and their larger opportunities of association gave them an influence in affairs which compensated for their inferiority in numbers. They lacked, however, what the country party possessed, a generous ideal of life. Though many of them were connected with the Presbyterian system, their common sense made them revolt from its rigidity, while at the same time their economical principles failed to supply them with any standard that could satisfy the imagination. Sir Andrew Freeport excites in us less interest than any member of the Spectator's Club. There was not yet constituted among the upper middle classes that mixed conception of good feeling, good breeding, and good taste which we now attach to the name of "gentleman."

Two main currents of opinion divided the country, to one of which a man was obliged to surrender himself if he wished to enjoy the pleasures of organised society. One of these was Puritanism, but this was undoubtedly the less popular, or at least the less fashionable. A protracted experience of Roundhead tyranny under the Long Parliament had inclined the nation to believe that almost any form of Government was preferable to that of the Saints. The Puritan, no longer the mere sectarian, as in the days of Elizabeth and James I., somewhat ridiculous in the extravagance of his opinions, but respectable from the constancy with which he maintained them, had ruled over them as a taskmaster, and had forced them, as far as he could by military violence, to practise the asceticism to which monks and nuns had voluntarily submitted themselves. The most innocent as well as the most brutal diversions of the people were

sacrificed to his spiritual pride. As Macaulay well says, he hated bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectator. The tendency of his creed was, in fact, anti-social. Beauty in his eyes was a snare, and pleasure a sin; the only mode of social intercourse which he approved was a sermon.

On the other hand, the habits of the Court, which gave the tone to all polite society, were almost equally distasteful to the instincts of the people. It was inevitable that the inclinations of Charles II. should be violently opposed to every sentiment of the Puritans. While he was in the power of the Scots he had been forced into feigned compliance with Presbyterian rites; the Puritans had put his father to death, and had condemned himself to many years of exile and hardship in Catholic countries. He had returned to his own land half French in his political and religious sympathies, and entirely so in his literary tastes. To convert and to corrupt those of his subjects who immediately surrounded him was an easy matter. "All by the king's example lived and loved." Poets, painters, and actors were forward to promote principles viewed with favour by their sovereign and not at all disagreeable to themselves. An ingenious philosopher elevated Absolutism into an intellectual and moral system, the consequence of which was to encourage the powerful in the indulgence of every selfish instinct. As the Puritans had oppressed the country with a system of inhuman religion and transcendental morality, so now, in order to get as far from Puritanism as possible, it seemed necessary for every one aspiring to be thought a gentleman to avow himself an atheist or a debauchee.

The ideas of the man in the mode after the Restoration are excellently hit off in one of the fictitious letters in the *Spectator*:—

"I am now between fifty and sixty, and had the honour to be well with the first men of taste and gallantry in the joyous reign of Charles the Second. As for yourself, Mr. Spectator, you seem with the utmost arrogance to undermine the very fundamentals upon which we conducted ourselves. It is monstrous to set up for a man of wit and yet deny that honour in a woman is anything but peevishness, that inclination is not the best rule of life, or virtue and vice anything else but health and disease. We had no more to do but to put a lady in a good humour, and all we could wish followed of course. Then, again, your Tully and your discourses of another life are the very bane of mirth and good humour. Pry'thee don't value thyself on thy reason at that exorbitant rate and the dignity of human nature; take my word for it, a setting dog has as good reason as any man in England." [1]

While opinions, which from different sides struck at the very roots of society, prevailed both in the fashionable and religious portions of the community, it was inevitable that Taste should be hopelessly corrupt. All the artistic and literary forms which the Court favoured were of the romantic order, but it was romance from which beauty and vitality had utterly disappeared. Of the two great principles of ancient chivalry, Love and Honour, the last notes of which are heard in the lyrics of Lovelace and Montrose, one was now held to be non-existent, and the other was utterly perverted. The feudal spirit had surrounded woman with an atmosphere of mystical devotion, but in the reign of Charles II. the passion of love was subjected to the torturing treatment then known as "wit." Cowley and Waller seem to

[1] *Spectator*, No. 158.

think that when a man is in love the energy of his feelings is best shown by discovering resemblances between his mistress and those objects in nature to which she is apparently most unlike.

The ideal of Woman, as she is represented in the *Spectator*, adding grace, charity, and refinement to domestic life, had still to be created. The king himself, the presumed mirror of good taste, was notoriously under the control of his numerous mistresses; and the highest notion of love which he could conceive was gallantry. French romances were therefore generally in vogue. All the casuistry of love which had been elaborated by Mademoiselle de Scudery was reproduced with improvements by Mrs. Aphra Behn. At the same time, as usually happens in diseased societies, there was a general longing to cultivate the simplicity of the Golden Age, and the consequence was that no person, even in the lower grades of society, who pretended to any reading, ever thought of making love in his own person. The proper tone of feeling was not acquired till he had invested himself with the pastoral attributes of Damon and Celadon, and had addressed his future wife as Amarantha or Phyllis.

The tragedies of the period illustrate this general inclination to spurious romance. If ever there was a time when the ideal of monarchy was degraded and the instincts of chivalrous action discouraged, it was in the reign of Charles II. Absorbed as he was in the pursuit of pleasure, the king scarcely attempted to conceal his weariness when obliged to attend to affairs of State. He allowed the Dutch fleet to approach his capital and to burn his own ships of war on the Thames; he sold

Dunkirk to the French; hardly any action in his life evinces any sense of patriotism or honour. And yet we have only to glance at Johnson's *Life of Dryden* to see how all the tragedies of the time turn on the great characters, the great actions, the great sufferings of princes. The Elizabethan drama had exhibited man in every degree of life and with every variety of character; the playwright of the Restoration seldom descended below such themes as the conquest of Mexico or Granada, the fortunes of the Great Mogul, and the fate of Hannibal. This monotony of subject was doubtless in part the result of policy, for, in pitying the fortunes of Montezuma, the imagination of the spectator insensibly recalled those of Charles the Second.

Everything in these tragedies is unreal, strained, and affected. In order to remove them as far as possible from the language of ordinary life they are written in rhyme, while the astonishment of the audience is raised with big swelling words, which vainly seek to hide the absence of genuine feeling. The heroes tear their passion to tatters because they think it heroic to do so; their flights into the sublime generally drop into the ridiculous; instead of holding up the mirror to nature, their object is to depart as far as possible from common sense. Nothing exhibits more characteristically the utterly artificial feeling, both of the dramatists and the spectators, than the habit which then prevailed of dismissing the audience after a tragic play with a witty epilogue. On one occasion, Nell Gwynne, in the character of St. Catherine, was, at the end of the play, left for dead upon the stage. Her body having to be removed, the actress suddenly started to her feet, exclaiming,

"Hold! are you mad? you damned confounded dog,
I am to rise and speak the epilogue!" [1]

By way of compensation, however, the writers of the period poured forth their real feelings without reserve in their comedies. So great, indeed, is the gulf that separates our own manners from theirs, that some critics have endeavoured to defend the comic dramatists of the Restoration against the moralists on the ground that their representations of Nature are entirely devoid of reality. Charles Lamb, who loved all curiosities, and the Caroline comedians among the number, says of them:—

"They are a world of themselves almost as much as fairy-land. Take one of their characters, male or female (with few exceptions they are alike), and place it in a modern play, and my virtuous indignation shall rise against the profligate wretch as warmly as the Catos of the pit could desire, because in a modern play I am to judge of the right and the wrong. The standard of *police* is the measure of *political justice*. The atmosphere will blight it; it cannot live here. It has got into a moral world, where it has no business, from which it must needs fall headlong; as dizzy and incapable of making a stand as a Swedenborgian bad spirit that has wandered unawares into his sphere of Good Men or Angels. But in its own world do we feel the creature is so very bad? The Fainalls and Mirabels, the Dorimants and Lady Touchwoods, in their own sphere do not offend my moral sense; in fact, they do not appeal to it at all. They seem engaged in their proper element. They break through no laws or conscientious restraints. They know of none. They have got out of Christendom into the land of—what shall I call it?—of cuckoldry—the Utopia of gallantry, where pleasure is duty and the manners perfect freedom. It is altogether a speculative scene of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is."

[1] *Spectator* No. 341.

This is a very happy description of the manner in which the plays of Etherege, Shadwell, Wycherley, and Congreve affect us to-day; and it is no doubt superfluous to expend much moral indignation on works which have long since lost their power to charm; comedies in which the reader finds neither the horseplay of Aristophanes, nor the nature of Terence, nor the poetry of Shakespeare; in which there is not a single character that arouses interest, or a situation that spontaneously provokes laughter; in which the complications of plot are produced by the devices of fine gentlemen for making cuckolds of citizens, and the artifices of wives to dupe their husbands; in which the profuse wit of the dialogue might excite admiration, if it were possible to feel the smallest interest in the occasion that produced it. But to argue that these plays never represented any state of existing society is a paradox which chooses to leave out of account the contemporary attack on the stage made by Jeremy Collier, the admissions of Dryden, and all those valuable glimpses into the manners of our ancestors which are afforded by the prologues of the period.

It is sufficient to quote against Lamb the witty and severe criticism of Steele in the *Spectator* upon Etherege's *Man of the Mode*:—

"It cannot be denied but that the negligence of everything which engages the attention of the sober and valuable part of mankind appears very well drawn in this piece. But it is denied that it is necessary to the character of a fine gentleman that he should in that manner trample upon all order and decency. As for the character of Dorimant, it is more of a coxcomb than that of Fopling. He says of one of his companions that a good correspondence between them is their mutual interest. Speaking of that friend, he declares

their being much together 'makes the women think the better of his understanding, and judge more favourably of my reputation. It makes him pass upon some for a man of very good sense, and me upon others for a very civil person.' This whole celebrated piece is a perfect contradiction to good manners, good sense, and common honesty; and as there is nothing in it but what is built upon the ruin of virtue and innocence, according to the notion of virtue in this comedy, I take the shoemaker to be in reality the fine gentleman of the play: for it seems he is an atheist, if we may depend upon his character as given by the orange-woman, who is herself far from being the lowest in the play. She says of a fine man who is Dorimant's companion, 'there is not such another heathen in the town except the shoemaker.' His pretension to be the hero of the drama appears still more in his own description of his way of living with his lady. 'There is,' says he, 'never a man in the town lives more like a gentleman with his wife than I do. I never mind her motions; she never inquires into mine. We speak to one another civilly; hate one another heartily; and, because it is vulgar to lie and soak together, we have each of us our several settle-beds.'

"That of 'soaking together' is as good as if Dorimant had spoken it himself; and I think, since he puts human nature in as ugly a form as the circumstances will bear and is a staunch unbeliever, he is very much wronged in having no part of the good fortune bestowed in the last act. To speak plain of this whole work, I think nothing but being lost to a sense of innocence and virtue can make any one see this comedy without observing more frequent occasion to move sorrow and indignation than mirth and laughter. At the same time I allow it to be nature, but it is nature in its utmost corruption and degeneracy." [1]

The truth is that the stage after the Restoration reflects only too faithfully the manners and the sentiments of the only society which at that period could boast of anything like organisation. The press, which now enables

[1] *Spectator*, No. 65.

public opinion to exercise so powerful a control over the manners of the times, had then scarcely an existence. No standard of female honour restrained the license of wit and debauchery. If the clergy were shocked at the propagation of ideas so contrary to the whole spirit of Christianity, their natural impulse to reprove them was checked by the fear that an apparent condemnation of the practices of the Court might end in the triumph of their old enemies, the Puritans. All the elements of an old and decaying form of society that tended to atheism, cynicism, and dissolute living, exhibited themselves therefore in naked shamelessness on the stage. The audiences in the theatres were equally devoid of good manners and good taste: they did not hesitate to interrupt the actors in the midst of a serious play, while they loudly applauded their obscene allusions. So gross was the character of comic dialogue that women could not venture to appear at a comedy without masks, and under these circumstances the theatre became the natural centre for assignations. In such an atmosphere women readily cast off all modesty and reserve; indeed, the choicest indecencies of the times are to be found in the epilogues to the plays which were always assigned to the female actors.

It at first sight seems remarkable that a society inveterately corrupt should have contained in itself such powers of purification and vitality as to discard the literary garbage of the Restoration period in favour of the refined sobriety which characterises the writers of Queen Anne's reign. But, in fact, the spread of the infection was confined within certain well-marked limits. The Court moved in a sphere apart, and was altogether too light and frivolous to exert a decided moral influ-

ence on the great body of the nation. The country gentlemen, busied on their estates, came seldom to town; the citizens, the lawyers, and the members of the other professions steadily avoided the theatre, and regarded with equal contempt the moral and literary excesses of the courtiers. Among this class, unrepresented at present in the world of letters, except perhaps by antiquarians like Selden, the foundations of sound taste were being silently laid. The readers of the nation had hitherto been almost limited to the nobility. Books were generally published by subscription, and were dependent for their success on the favour with which they were received by the courtiers. But, after the subsidence of the Civil War, the nation began to make rapid strides in wealth and refinement, and the monied classes sought for intellectual amusement in their leisure hours. Authors by degrees found that they might look for readers beyond the select circle of their aristocratic patrons; and the bookseller, who had hitherto calculated his profits merely by the commission he might obtain on the sale of books, soon perceived that they were becoming valuable as property. The reign of Charles II. is remarkable not only for the great increase in the number of the licensed printers in London, but for the appearance of the first of the race of modern publishers, Jacob Tonson.

The portion of society whose tastes the publishers undertook to satisfy was chiefly interested in history, poetry, and criticism. It was this for which Dryden composed his *Miscellany*, this to which he addressed the admirable critical essays which precede his *Translations from the Latin Poets* and his *Versifications of Chaucer*, and this which afterwards gave the main support to the *Tatler*

and the *Spectator*. Ignorant of the writings of the great classical authors, as well as of the usages of polite society, these men were nevertheless robust and manly in their ideas, and were eager to form for themselves a correct standard of taste by reference to the best authorities. Though they turned with repugnance from the playhouse and from the morals of the Court, they could not avoid being insensibly affected by the tone of grace and elegance which prevailed in Court circles. And in this respect, if in no other, our gratitude is due to the Caroline dramatists, who may justly claim to be the founders of the *social* prose style in English literature. Before them English prose had been employed, no doubt, with music and majesty by many writers; but the style of these is scarcely representative; they had used the language for their own elevated purposes, without, however, attempting to give it that balanced fineness and subtlety which makes it a fitting instrument for conveying the complex ideas of an advanced stage of society. Dryden, Wycherley, and their followers, impelled by the taste of the Court to study the French language, brought to English composition a nicer standard of logic and a more choice selection of language, while the necessity of pleasing their audiences with brilliant dialogue made them careful to give their sentences that well-poised structure which Addison afterwards carried to perfection in the *Spectator*.

By this brief sketch the reader may be enabled to judge of the distracted state of society, both in politics and taste, in the reign of Charles II. On the one side, the Monarchical element in the Constitution was represented by the Court Party, flushed with the recent restoration; retaining the old ideas and principles of

absolutism which had prevailed under James I., without being able to perceive their inapplicability to the existing nature of things; feeding its imagination alternately on sentiments derived from the decayed spirit of chivalry, and on artistic representations of fashionable debauchery in its most open form—a party which, while it fortunately preserved the traditions of wit, elegance, and gaiety of style, seemed unaware that these qualities could be put to any other use than the mitigation of an intolerable *ennui*. On the other side, the rising power of Democracy found its representatives in austere Republicans opposed to all institutions in Church and State that seemed to obstruct their own abstract principles of government; gloomy fanatics, who, with an intense intellectual appreciation of eternal principles of religion and morality, sought to sacrifice to their system the most permanent and even innocent instincts of human nature. Between the two extreme parties was the unorganised body of the nation, grouped round old customs and institutions, rapidly growing in wealth and numbers, conscious of the rise in their midst of new social principles, but perplexed how to reconcile these with time-honoured methods of religious, political, and literary thought. To lay the foundations of sound opinion among the people at large; to prove that reconciliation was possible between principles hitherto exhibited only in mutual antagonism; to show that under the English Constitution monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy might all be harmonised, that humanity was not absolutely incompatible with religion or morality with art, was the task of the statesmen, and still more of the men of letters, of the early part of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER II.

ADDISON'S FAMILY AND EDUCATION.

JOSEPH ADDISON was born on the 1st of May 1672. He was the eldest son of Lancelot Addison, at the time of his birth rector of Milston, near Amesbury, in Wiltshire, and afterwards Dean of Lichfield. His father was a man of character and accomplishments. Educated at Oxford, while that University was under the control of the famous Puritan Visitation, he made no secret of his contempt for principles to which he was forced to submit, or of his preferences for Monarchy and Episcopacy. His boldness was not agreeable to the University authorities, and, being forced to leave Oxford, he maintained himself for a time near Petworth, in Sussex, by acting as chaplain or tutor in families attached to the Royalist cause. After the Restoration he obtained the appointment of chaplain to the garrison of Dunkirk, and when that town was ceded to France in 1662, he was removed in a similar capacity to Tangier. Here he remained eight years, but, venturing on a visit to England, his post was bestowed upon another, and he would have been left without resources, had not one of his friends presented him with the living of Milston, valued at £120 a year. With the courage of his order he thereupon took

a wife, Jane, daughter of Dr. Nathaniel Gulston, and sister of William Gulston, Bishop of Bristol, by whom he had six children, three sons and three daughters, all born at Milston. In 1675 he was made a prebendary of Salisbury Cathedral and Chaplain-in-Ordinary to the King; and in 1683 he was promoted to the Deanery of Lichfield, as a reward for his services at Tangier, and out of consideration of losses which he had sustained by a fire at Milston. His literary reputation stood high, and it is said that he would have been made a bishop, if his old zeal for legitimacy had not prompted him to manifest in the Convocation of 1689 his hostility to the Revolution. He died in 1703.

Lancelot was a writer at once voluminous and lively. In the latter part of his life he produced several treatises on theological subjects, the most popular of which was called *An Introduction to the Sacrament*. This book passed through many editions. The doctrine it contains leans rather to the Low Church side. But much the most characteristic of his writings were his works on Mahommedanism and Judaism, the results of his studies during his residence in Barbary. These show not only considerable industry and research and powers of shrewd observation, but that genuine literary faculty which enables a writer to leave upon a subject of a general nature the impression of his own character. While there is nothing forced or exaggerated in his historical style, a vein of allegory runs through the narrative of the *Revolutions of the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco*, which must have had a piquant flavour for the orthodox English reader of that day. Recollections of the Protectorate would have taken nothing of its vividness from the por-

trait of the Moorish priest who "began to grow into reputation with the people by reason of his high pretensions to piety and fervent zeal for their law, illustrated by a stubborn rigidity of conversation and outward sanctity of life." When the Zeriffe, with ambitious designs on the throne, sent his sons on a pilgrimage to Mecca, the religious buffooneries practised by the young men must have recalled to the reader circumstances more recent and personal than those which the author was apparently describing. "Much was the reverence and reputation of holiness which they thereby acquired among the superstitious people, who could hardly be kept from kissing their garments and adoring them as saints, while they failed not in their parts, but acted as much devotion as high contemplative looks, deep sighs, tragical gestures, and other passionate interjections of holiness could express. 'Allah, allah!' was their doleful note, their sustenance the people's alms." And when these impostors had inveigled the King of Fez into a religious war, the description of those who "mistrusted their own safety and began, but too late, to repent their approving of an armed hypocrisy" was not more applicable to the rulers of Barbary than to the people of England. "Puffed up with their successes, they forgot their obedience, and these saints denied the king the fifth part of their spoils . . . By which it appeared that they took up arms, not out of love for their country and zeal for their religion, but out of desire of rule." There is, indeed, nothing in these utterances which need have prevented the writer from consistently promoting the Revolution of 1688; yet his principles seem to have carried him far in the opposite direction; and it is inter-

esting to remember that the assertor in Convocation of the doctrine of indefeasible hereditary right was the father of the author of the *Whig Examiner* and the *Freeholder*. However decidedly Joseph may have dissented from his father's political creed, we know that he entertained admiration and respect for his memory, and that death alone prevented him from completing the monument afterwards erected in Lancelot's honour in Lichfield Cathedral.

Of Addison's mother nothing of importance is recorded. His second brother, Gulston, became Governor of Fort St. George, in the East Indies; and the third, Lancelot, followed in Joseph's footsteps so far as to obtain a Fellowship at Magdalen College, Oxford. His sisters, Jane and Anna, died young; but Dorothy was twice married, and Swift records in her honour that she was "a kind of wit, and very like her brother." We may readily believe that a writer so lively as Lancelot would have had clever children, but Steele was perhaps carried away by the zeal of friendship or the love of epigram when he said in his dedication to the *Drummer*: "Mr. Dean Addison left behind him four children, each of whom, for excellent talents and singular perfections, was as much above the ordinary world as their brother Joseph was above them." But that Steele had a sincere admiration for the whole family is sufficiently shown by his using them as an example in one of his early *Tatlers*:—

"I remember among all my acquaintance but one man whom I have thought to live with his children with equanimity and a good grace. He had three sons and one daughter, whom he bred with all the care imaginable in a liberal and

ingenuous way. I have often heard him say he had the weakness to love one much better than the other, but that he took as much pains to correct that as any other criminal passion that could arise in his mind. His method was to make it the only pretension in his children to his favour to be kind to each other, and he would tell them that he who was the best brother he would reckon the best son. This turned their thoughts into an emulation for the superiority in kind and tender affection towards each other. The boys behaved themselves very early with a manly friendship ; and their sister, instead of the gross familiarities and impertinent freedoms in behaviour usual in other houses, was always treated by them with as much complaisance as any other young lady of their acquaintance. It was an unspeakable pleasure to visit or sit at a meal in that family. I have often seen the old man's heart flow at his eyes with joy upon occasions which would appear indifferent to such as were strangers to the turn of his mind ; but a very slight accident, wherein he saw his children's good-will to one another, created in him the god-like pleasure of loving them because they loved each other. This great command of himself in hiding his first impulse to partiality at last improved to a steady justice towards them, and that which at first was but an expedient to correct his weakness was afterwards the measure of his virtue." [1]

This, no doubt, is the set description of a moralist, and to an age in which the liberty of manners has grown into something like license it may savour of formalism and priggishness ; but when we remember that the writer was one of the most warm-hearted of men, and that the subject of his panegyric was himself full of vivacity and impulse, it must be admitted that the picture which it gives us of the Addison family in the rectory of Milston is a particularly amiable one.

Though the eighteenth century had little of that feel-

[1] *Tatler*, No. 25.

ing for natural beauty which distinguishes our own, a man of Addison's imagination could hardly fail to be impressed by the character of the scenery in which his childhood was passed. No one who has travelled on a summer's day across Salisbury Plain, with its vast canopy of sky and its open tracts of undulating downland, relieved by no shadows except such as are thrown by the passing cloud, the grazing sheep, and the great circle of Stonehenge, will forget the delightful sense of refreshment and repose produced by the descent into the valley of the Avon. The sounds of human life rising from the villages after the long solitude of the plain, the shade of the deep woods, the coolness of the river, like all streams rising in the chalk, clear and peaceful, are equally delicious to the sense and the imagination. It was, doubtless, the recollection of these scenes that inspired Addison in his paraphrase of the twenty-third Psalm :—

"The Lord my pasture shall prepare,
And feed me with a shepherd's care.

. . . . .

When in the sultry glebe I faint,
Or on the thirsty mountain pant,
To fertile vales and dewy meads
My weary wandering steps he leads,
Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
Amid the verdant landscape flow."

At Amesbury he was first sent to school, his master being one Nash; and here, too, he probably met with the first recorded adventure of his life. It is said that, having committed some fault and being fearful of the consequences, he ran away from school, and, taking up his abode in a hollow tree, maintained himself as he could,

till he was discovered and brought back to his parents. He was removed from Amesbury to Salisbury, and thence to the Grammar School at Lichfield, where he is said to have been the leader in a "barring out." From Lichfield he passed to the Charter House, then under the charge of Dr. Ellis, a man of taste and scholarship. The Charter House at that period was, after Westminster, the best-known school in England, and here was laid the foundation of that sound classical taste which perfected the style of the essays in the *Spectator*.

Macaulay labours with much force and ingenuity to prove that Addison's classical acquirements were only superficial, and, in his usual epigrammatic manner, hazards the opinion that "his knowledge of Greek, though doubtless such as was, in his time, thought respectable at Oxford, was evidently less than that which many lads now carry away every year from Eton and Rugby." That Addison was not a scholar of the class of Bentley or Porson may be readily admitted. But many scattered allusions in his works prove that his acquaintance with the Greek poets of every period, if cursory, was wide and intelligent; he was sufficiently master of the language thoroughly to understand the spirit of what he read; he undertook while at Oxford a translation of Herodotus, and one of the papers in the *Spectator* is a direct imitation of a *jeu d'esprit* of Lucian's. The Eton or Rugby boy who, in these days, with a normal appetite for cricket and football, acquired an equal knowledge of Greek literature, would certainly be somewhat of a prodigy.

No doubt, however, Addison's knowledge of the Latin

poets was, as Macaulay infers, far more extensive and profound. It would have been strange had it been otherwise. The influence of the classical side of the Italian Renaissance was now at its height, and wherever those ideas became paramount Latin composition was held in at least as much esteem as poetry in the vernacular. Especially was this the case in England, where certain affinities of character and temperament made it easy for writers to adopt Roman habits of thought. Latin verse composition soon took firm root in the public schools and universities, so that clever boys of the period were tolerably familiar with most of the minor Roman poets. Pope, in the fourth book of the *Dunciad*, vehemently attacked the tradition as confining the mind to the study of words rather than of things; but he had himself had no experience of a public school, and only those who fail to appreciate the influence of Latin verse composition on the style of our own greatest orators, and of poets like Milton and Gray, will be inclined to undervalue it as an instrument of social and literary training.

Proficiency in this art may at least be said to have laid the foundation of Addison's fortunes. Leaving the Charter House in 1687, at the early age of fifteen, he was entered at Queen's College, Oxford, and remained a member of that society for two years, when a copy of his Latin verses fell into the hands of Dr. Lancaster, then Fellow and afterwards Provost of the College. Struck with their excellence, Lancaster used his influence to obtain for him a demyship at Magdalen. The subject of this fortunate set of verses was "Inauguratio Regis Gulielmi," from which fact we may reasonably infer that even in his boyhood his mind had acquired a

Whig bias. Whatever inclination he may have had in this direction would have been confirmed by the associations of his new college. The fluctuations of opinion in Magdalen had been frequent and extraordinary. Towards the close of Elizabeth's reign it was notorious for its Calvinism, but under the Chancellorship of Laud it appears to have adopted, with equal ardour, the cause of Arminianism, for it was among the colleges that offered the stoutest opposition to the Puritan visitors in 1647-48. The despotic tendencies of James II., however, again cooled its loyalty, and its spirited resistance to the king's order for the election of a Roman Catholic President had given a mortal blow to the Stuart dynasty. Hough was now President, but in consequence of the dispute with the king there had been no election of demies in 1688, so that twice the usual number was chosen in the following year, and the occasion was distinguished by the name of the "golden election." From Magdalen Addison proceeded to his master's degree in 1693; the College elected him probationary Fellow in 1697, and actual Fellow the year after. He retained his Fellowship till 1711.

Of his tastes, habits, and friendships at Oxford there are few records. Among his acquaintance were Boulter, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin—whose memory is unenviably perpetuated in company with Ambrose Phillips in Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot*,

> "Does not one table Bavius still admit,
> Still to one Bishop Phillips seem a wit?"—

and possibly the famous Sacheverell.[1] He is said to have

[1] A note in the edition of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, published in 1801, states, on the authority of a "Lady in Wiltshire," who

shown in the society of Magdalen some of the shyness that afterwards distinguished him; he kept late hours, and read chiefly after dinner. The walk under the well-known elms by the Cherwell is still connected with his name. Though he probably acted as tutor in the college, the greater part of his quiet life at the University was doubtless occupied in study. A proof of his early maturity is seen in the fact that, in his nineteenth year, a young man of birth and fortune, Mr. Rushout, who was being educated at Magdalen, was placed under his charge.

His reputation as a scholar and a man of taste soon extended itself to the world of letters in London. In 1693, being then in his twenty-second year, he wrote his *Account of the Greatest English Poets;* and about the same time he addressed a short copy of verses to Dryden, complimenting him on the enduring vigour of his poetical faculty as shown in his translations of Virgil and other Latin poets, some of which had recently appeared in Tonson's *Miscellany*. The old poet appears to have been highly gratified, and to have welcomed the advances thus made to him, for he returned Addison's compliment by bestowing high and not unmerited praise on the translation of the Fourth Book of the *Georgics*, which the latter soon after undertook, and by printing, as a preface to his own translation, a discourse written by Addison on the *Georgics*, as well as arguments to most of the books of the *Æneid*.

derived her information from a Mr. Stephens, a Fellow of Magdalen and a contemporary of Addison's, that the Henry Sacheverell to whom Addison dedicated his *Account of the Greatest English Poets* was not the well-known divine, but a personal friend of Addison's, who died young, having written a *History of the Isle of Man*.

Through Dryden, no doubt, he became acquainted with Jacob Tonson. The father of English publishing had for some time been a well-known figure in the literary world. He had purchased the copyright of *Paradise Lost;* he had associated himself with Dryden in publishing before the Revolution two volumes of *Miscellanies;* encouraged by the success which these obtained, he put the poet in 1693 on some translations of Juvenal and Persius, and two new volumes of *Miscellanies;* while in 1697 he urged him to undertake a translation of the whole of the works of Virgil. Observing how strongly the public taste set towards the great classical writers, he was anxious to employ men of ability in the work of turning them into English; and it appears from existing correspondence that he engaged Addison, while the latter was at Oxford, to superintend a translation of Herodotus. He also suggested a translation of Ovid. Addison undertook to procure coadjutors for the work of translating the Greek historian. He himself actually translated the books called *Polymnia* and *Urania*, but for some unexplained reason the work was never published. For Ovid he seems, on the whole, to have had less inclination. At Tonson's instance he translated the second book of the *Metamorphoses*, which was first printed in the volume of *Miscellanies* that appeared in 1697; but he wrote to the publisher that "Ovid had so many silly stories with his good ones that he was more tedious to translate than a better poet would be." His study of Ovid, however, was of the greatest use in developing his critical faculty; the excesses and want of judgment in that poet forced him to reflect, and his observations on the style of his

author anticipate his excellent remarks on the difference between True and False Wit in the sixty-second number of the *Spectator*.

Whoever, indeed, compares these notes with the *Essay on the Georgics*, and with the opinions expressed in the *Account of the English Poets*, will be convinced that the foundations of his critical method were laid at this period (1697). In the *Essay on the Georgics* he seems to be timid in the presence of Virgil's superiority; his *Account of the English Poets*, besides being impregnated with the principles of taste prevalent after the Restoration, shows deficient powers of perception and appreciation. The name of Shakespeare is not mentioned in it, Dryden and Congreve alone being selected to represent the drama. Chaucer is described as "a merry bard," whose humour has become obsolete through time and change; while the rich pictorial fancy of the *Faery Queen* is thus described:

> "Old Spenser next, warmed with poetic rage,
> In ancient tales amused a barbarous age—
> An age that yet uncultivate and rude,
> Where'er the poet's fancy led pursued,
> Through pathless fields and unfrequented floods,
> To dens of dragons and enchanted woods.
> But now the mystic tale, that pleased of yore,
> Can charm an understanding age no more;
> The long-spun allegories fulsome grow,
> While the dull moral lies too plain below."

According to Pope—always a suspicious witness where Addison is concerned—he had not read Spenser when he wrote this criticism on him.[1]

Milton, as a legitimate successor of the classics, is of course appreciated, but not at all after the elaborate

[1] *Spence's Anecdotes*, p. 50.

fashion of the *Spectator;* to Dryden, the most distinguished poet of the day, deserved compliments are paid, but their value is lessened by the exaggerated opinion which the writer entertains of Cowley, who is described as a "mighty genius," and is praised for the inexhaustible riches of his imagination. Throughout the poem, in fact, we observe a remarkable confusion of various veins of thought; an unjust depreciation of the Gothic grandeur of the older English poets; a just admiration for the Greek and Roman authors; a sense of the necessity of good sense and regularity in writings composed for an "understanding age;" and at the same time a lingering taste for the forced invention and far-fetched conceits that mark the decay of the spirit of mediæval chivalry.

With the judgments expressed in this performance it is instructive to compare such criticisms on Shakespeare as we find in No. 42 of the *Spectator;* the papers on "Chevy Chase" (73, 74); and particularly the following passage:—

"As true wit consists in the resemblance of ideas, and false wit in the resemblance of words, according to the foregoing instances, there is another kind of wit, which consists partly in the resemblance of ideas and partly in the resemblance of words, which, for distinction's sake, I shall call mixed wit. This kind of wit is that which abounds in Cowley more than in any author that ever wrote. Mr. Waller has likewise a great deal of it. Mr. Dryden is very sparing in it. Milton has a genius much above it. *Spenser is in the same class with Milton.* The Italians even in their epic poetry are full of it. Monsieur Boileau, who formed himself upon the ancient poets, has everywhere rejected it with scorn. If we look after mixed wit among the Greeks we shall find it nowhere but in the epigrammatists. There are indeed some strokes of it in the little poem ascribed to Musæus, which by that, as well as many other marks, betrays itself to

be a modern composition. If we look into the Latin writers we find none of this mixed wit in Virgil, Lucretius, or Catullus; very little in Horace, but a great deal of it in Ovid, and scarce anything else in Martial."

The stepping-stone from the immaturity of the early criticisms in the *Account of the Greatest English Poets* to the finished ease of the *Spectator* is to be found in the notes to the translation of Ovid.[1]

The time came when he was obliged to form a decision affecting the entire course of his life. Tonson, who had a wide acquaintance, no doubt introduced him to Congreve and the leading men of letters in London, and through them he was presented to Somers and Montague. Those ministers perhaps persuaded him, as a point of etiquette, to write in 1695, his *Address to King William*, a poem composed in a vein of orthodox hyperbole, all of which must have been completely thrown away on that most unpoetical of monarchs. Yet in spite of those seductions Addison lingered at Oxford. To retain his Fellowship it was necessary for him to take orders. Had he done so, there can be no doubt that his literary skill and his value as a political partizan would have opened for him a road to the highest preferment. At that time the clergy were far from thinking it unbecoming to their cloth to fight in the political arena or to take part in journalism. Swift would have been advanced to a bishopric as a reward for his political services if it had not been for the prejudice entertained towards him by Queen Anne; Boulter, rector of St. Saviour's, Southwark, having made himself conspicuous by editing a

[1] Compare the *Notes on the Metamorphoses*, Fab. v. (Tickell's edition, vol. vi. p. 183), where the substance of the above passage is found in embryo.

paper called the *Freethinker*, was raised to the Primacy of Ireland; Hoadley, the notorious Bishop of Bangor, edited the *London Journal;* the honours that were awarded to two men of such second-rate intellectual capacity would hardly have been denied to Addison. He was inclined in this direction by the example and advice of his father, who was now Dean of Lichfield, and who was urgent on his son to rid himself of the pecuniary embarrassments in which he was involved, by embracing the Church as a profession. A few years before he had himself seemed to look upon the Church as his future sphere. In his *Account of the Greatest English Poets*, he says:—

> "I leave the arts of poetry and verse
> To them that practise them with more success.
> Of greater truths I'll now propose to tell,
> And so at once, dear friend and muse, farewell."

Had he followed up his intention we might have known the name of Addison as that of an artful controversialist, and perhaps as a famous writer of sermons; but we should, in all probability, have never heard of the *Spectator*.

Fortunately for English letters other influences prevailed to give a different direction to his fortunes. It is true that Tickell, Addison's earliest biographer, states that his determination not to take orders was the result of his own habitual self-distrust, and of a fear of the responsibilities which the clerical office would involve. But Steele, who was better acquainted with his friend's private history, on reading Tickell's Memoir, addressed a letter to Congreve on the subject, in which he says:—

> "These, you know very well, were not the reasons which

made Mr. Addison turn his thoughts to the civil world; and, as you were the instrument of his becoming acquainted with Lord Halifax, I doubt not but you remember the warm instances that noble lord made to the head of the College not to insist upon Mr. Addison's going into orders. His arguments were founded upon the general pravity and corruption of men of business, who wanted liberal education. And I remember, as if I had read the letter yesterday, that my lord ended with a compliment, that, however he might be represented as a friend to the Church, he never would do it any other injury than keeping Mr. Addison out of it."

No doubt the real motive of the interest in Addison shown by Lord Halifax, at that time known as Charles Montague, was an anxiety which he shared with all the leading statesmen of the period, and of which more will be said presently, to secure for his party the services of the ablest writers. Finding his *protégé* as yet hardly qualified to transact affairs of State, he joined with Lord Somers, who had also fixed his eyes on Addison, in soliciting for him from the Crown in 1699 a pension of £300 a year, which might enable him to supplement his literary accomplishments with the practical experience of travel. Addison naturally embraced the offer. He looked forward to studying the political institutions of foreign countries, to seeing the spots of which he had read in his favourite classical authors, and to meeting the most famous men of letters on the Continent.

It is characteristic both of his own tastes and of his age that he seems to have thought his best passport to intellectual society abroad would be his Latin poems. His verses on the *Peace of Ryswick*, written in 1697 and dedicated to Montague, had already procured him great reputation, and had been praised by

Edmund Smith—a high authority—as "the best Latin poem since the *Æneid*." This gave him the opportunity of collecting his various compositions of the same kind, and in 1699 he published from the Sheldonian Press a second volume of the *Musæ Anglicanæ*—the first having appeared in 1691—containing poems by various Oxford scholars. Among the contributors were Hannes, one of the many scholarly physicians of the period; J. Philips, the author of the *Splendid Shilling;* and Alsop, a prominent antagonist of Bentley, whose Horatian humour is celebrated by Pope in the *Dunciad*.[1]

But the most interesting of the names in the volume is that of the once celebrated Edmond, commonly called "Rag," Smith, author of the *Ode on the Death of Dr. Pocock*, who seems to have been among Addison's intimate acquaintance, and deserves to be recollected in connection with him on account of a certain similarity in their genius and the extraordinary difference in their fortunes. "Rag" was a man of fine accomplishments and graceful humour, but, like other scholars of the same class, indolent and licentious. In spite of great indulgence extended to him by the authorities of Christ Church, he was expelled from the University in consequence of his irregularities. His friends stood by him, and, through the interest of Addison, a proposal was made to him to undertake a history of the Revolution, which, however, from political scruples he felt himself obliged to decline. Like Addison, he wrote a tragedy modelled on classical lines; but, as it had no political significance, it only pleased the critics, without, like "Cato," interesting the public. Like Addison, too, he had an opportunity of profiting

[1] *Dunciad*, Book iv. 224.

by the patronage of Halifax, but laziness or whim prevented him from keeping an appointment which the latter had made with him, and caused him to miss a place worth £300 a year. Addison, by his own exertions, rose to posts of honour and profit, and towards the close of his life became Secretary of State. Smith envied his advancement, and, ignoring the fact that his own failure was entirely due to himself, murmured at fortune for leaving him in poverty. Yet he estimated his wants at £600 a year, and died of indulgence when he can scarcely have been more than forty years of age.

Addison's compositions in the *Musæ Anglicanæ* are eight in number. All of them are distinguished by the ease and flow of the versification, but they are generally wanting in originality. The best of them is the *Pygmæo-Gerano-Machia*, which is also interesting as showing traces of that rich vein of humour which Addison worked out in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. The mock-heroic style in prose and verse was sedulously cultivated in England throughout the eighteenth century. Swift, Pope, Arbuthnot, and Fielding, developed it in various forms; but Addison's Latin poem is perhaps the first composition in which the fine fancy and invention, afterwards shown in the *Rape of the Lock* and *Gulliver's Travels*, conspicuously displayed itself.

A literary success of this kind at that epoch gave a writer a wider reputation than he could gain by compositions in his own language. Armed, therefore, with copies of the *Musæ Anglicanæ* for presentation to scholars, and with Halifax's recommendatory letters to men of political distinction, Addison started for the Continent.

CHAPTER III.

ADDISON ON HIS TRAVELS.

TRAVELLING in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries involved an amount of thought and precaution which would have seemed inconvenient to the tourist accustomed to abandon himself to the authority of guide-books, couriers, and railway companies. By ardent spirits like Roderick Random it was regarded as the sphere of enterprise and fortune, and not without reason, in days when adventures were to be met with on almost every road in the country, and in the streets and inns of the towns. The graver portion of society, on the other hand, considered it as part of the regular course of education through which every young man of position ought to pass before entering into active life. French was the universally recognised language of diplomacy. French manners and conversation were considered to be the best school for politeness, while Italy was held in the highest respect by the northern nations as the source of revived art and letters. Some of the most distinguished Englishmen of the time looked, it is true, with little favour on this fashionable training. "Lord Cowper," says Spence, on the information of Dr. Conybeare, "on his death-bed ordered that his son should never travel (it is by the

absolute desire of the Queen that he does). He ordered this from a good deal of observation on its effects; he had found that there was little to be hoped, and much to be feared, from travelling. Atwell, who is the young lord's tutor abroad, gives but a very discouraging account of it too in his letters; and seems to think that people are sent out too young, and are too hasty to find any great good from it."

On some of the stronger and more enthusiastic minds the chief effect of the grand tour was to produce a violent hatred of all foreign manners. Dennis, the critic, for instance, who, after leaving Cambridge, spent some time on the Continent, returned with a confirmed dislike to the French, and ostentatiously displayed in his writings how much he held "dragoons and wooden shoes in scorn," and it is amusing to find Addison at a later date making his Tory fox-hunter declare this anti-Gallican temper to be the main fruits of foreign travel.

But, in general, what was intended to be a school for manners and political instruction proved rather a source of unsettlement and dissipation; and the vigorous and glowing lines in which Pope makes the tutor describe to Dulness the doings of the "young Æneas" abroad, may be taken as a faithful picture of the travelled pupil of the period.

"Intrepid then o'er seas and land he flew;
Europe he saw, and Europe saw him too.
There all thy gifts and graces we display,
Thou, only thou, directing all our way!
To where the Seine, obsequious as she runs,
Pours at great Bourbon's feet her silken sons;
Or Tyber, now no longer Roman, rolls,
Vain of Italian arts, Italian souls:

To happy convents bosomed deep in vines,
Where slumber abbots purple as their wines:
To isles of fragrance, lily-silvered vales,
Diffusing languor in the panting gales:
To lands of singing or of dancing slaves,
Love-whispering woods, and lute-resounding waves.
But chief her shrine where naked Venus keeps,
And Cupids ride the lion of the deeps;
Where, eased of fleets, the Adriatic main
Wafts the smooth eunuch and enamoured swain.
Led by my hand, he sauntered Europe round,
And gathered every vice on Christian ground;
Saw every court, heard every king declare
His royal sense of operas or the fair;
The stews and palace equally explored,
Intrigued with glory, and with spirit whored;
Tried all *hors-d'œuvres*, all liqueurs defined,
Judicious drank, and greatly daring dined;
Dropped the dull lumber of the Latin store,
Spoiled his own language, and acquired no more;
All classic learning lost on classic ground;
And last turned air, the echo of a sound."

It is needless to say that Addison's experiences of travel were of a very different kind. He left England in his twenty-eighth year, with a mind well equipped from a study of the best authors, and with the intention of qualifying himself for political employment at home, after familiarising himself with the languages and manners of foreign countries. His sojourn abroad extended over four years, and his experience was more than usually varied and comprehensive. Crossing from Dover to Calais some time in the summer of 1699, he spent nearly eighteen months in France making himself master of the language. In December 1700 he embarked at Marseilles for a tour in Italy, and visited in succession the following places:—Monaco, Genoa, Pavia, Milan,

Brescia, Verona, Padua, Venice, Ferrara, Ravenna, Rimini, S. Marino, Pesaro, Fano, Sinigaglia, Ancona, Loreto, Rome (where, as it was his intention to return, he only visited St. Peter's and the Pantheon), Naples, Capri, whence he came back to Rome by sea, the various towns in the neighbourhood of Rome, Siena, Leghorn, Pisa, Lucca, Florence, Bologna, Modena, Parma, and Turin. Thus, in the course of this journey, which lasted exactly a twelvemonth, he twice crossed the Apennines, and made acquaintance with all the more important cities in the northern part of the Peninsula. In December 1701 he passed over Mont Cenis to Geneva, proceeding then by Fribourg, Berne, Soleure, Zurich, St. Gall, Linden, Insbruck, Hall, to Vienna, where he arrived in the autumn of 1702. After making a brief stay in the Austrian capital he turned his face homewards, and having visited the Protestant cities of Germany, and made a rather longer stay in Hamburg than in any other, he reached Holland in the spring of 1703, and remained in that country till his return to England some time in the autumn of the same year.

During his journey he made notes for his *Remarks on Italy*, which he published immediately on his return home, and he amused himself while crossing Mont Cenis, with composing his *Letter to Lord Halifax*, which contains, perhaps, the best verses he ever wrote. Though the ground over which he passed was well trodden, and though he possessed none of the special knowledge which gives value to the observations of travellers like Arthur Young, yet his remarks on the people and places he saw are the product of an original mind, and his illustrations of his route from the Latin poets are remarkably happy and

graceful. It is interesting also to observe how many of the thoughts and suggestions which occurred to him on the road are afterwards worked up into papers for the *Spectator*.

When Addison landed in France in 1699, the power of Louis XIV., so long the determined enemy of the English Revolution of 1688, had passed its climax. The Peace of Ryswick, by which the hopes of the Jacobites were finally demolished, was two years old. The king, disappointed in his dreams of boundless military glory, had fallen into a fit of devotion, and Addison, arriving from England, with a very imperfect knowledge of the language, was astonished to find the whole of French literature saturated with the royal taste. "As for the state of learning," says he in a letter to Montague, dated August 1699, "there is no book comes out at present that has not something in it of an air of devotion. Dacier has bin forced to prove his Plato a very good Christian before he ventures upon his translation, and has so far comply'd with y^e^ tast of the age, that his whole book is overrun with texts of Scripture, and y^e^ notion of præ-existence, supposed to be stolen from two verses of y^e^ prophets. Nay, y^e^ humour is grown so universal that it is got among y^e^ poets, who are every day publishing Lives of Saints and Legends in Rhime."

Finding, perhaps, that the conversation at the capital was not very congenial to his taste, he seems to have hurried on to Blois, a town then noted for the purity with which its inhabitants spoke the French language, and where he had determined to make his temporary abode. His only record of his first impressions of Paris is a casual criticism of "y^e^ King's Statue that is lately

set up in the Place Vendôme." He visited, however, both Versailles and Fontainebleau, and the preference which he gives to the latter (in a letter to Congreve) is interesting, as anticipating that taste for natural, as opposed to artificial beauty, which he afterwards expressed in the *Spectator*.

"I don't believe, as good a poet as you are, that you can make finer Lanskips than those about the King's houses, or with all yo^{r} descriptions build a more magnificent palace than Versailles. I am, however, so singular as to prefer Fontainebleau to the rest. It is situated among rocks and woods that give you a fine variety of Savage prospects. The King has Humoured the Genius of the place, and only made of so much art as is necessary to Help and regulate Nature, without reforming her too much. The Cascades seem to break through the Clefts and cracks of Rocks that are covered over with Moss, and look as if they were piled upon one another by Accident. There is an artificial wildness in the Meadows, Walks, and Canals, and y^{e} Garden, instead of a Wall, is Fenced on the Lower End by a Natural Mound of Rock-work that strikes the eye very agreeably. For my part, I think there is something more charming in these rude heaps of Stone than in so many Statues, and wou'd as soon see a River winding through Woods and Meadows as when it is tossed up in such a variety of figures at Versailles."[1]

Here and there, too, his correspondence exhibits traces of that delicate vein of ridicule in which he is without a rival, as in the following inimitable description of Le Brun's paintings at Versailles :—

"The painter has represented his most Xtian Majesty

[1] Compare *Spectator* 414. "I do not know whether I am singular in my opinion, but for my part I would rather look upon a tree in all its luxuriancy and diffusion of boughs and branches, rather than when it is thus cut and trimmed into a mathematical figure; and cannot but fancy that an orchard in flower looks infinitely more delightful than all the little labyrinths of the finished parterre."

under y^e^ figure of Jupiter throwing thunderbolts all about the ceiling, and striking terror into y^e^ Danube and Rhine, that lie astonished and blasted a little above the Cornice."

Of his life at Blois a very slight sketch has been preserved by the Abbe Philippeaux, one of the many gossiping informants from whom Spence collected his anecdotes :—

"Mr. Addison stayed above a year at Blois. He would rise as early as between two and three in summer, and lie abed till between eleven and twelve in the depth of winter. He was untalkative while here, and often thoughtful ; sometimes so lost in thought that I have come into his room and have stayed five minutes there before he has known anything of it. He had his masters generally at supper with him, kept very little company beside, and had no amour whilst here that I know of, and I think I should have known it if he had had any."

The following characteristic letter to a gentleman of Blois, with whom he seems to have had an altercation, is interesting as showing the mixture of coolness and dignity, the "blood and judgment well commingled" which Hamlet praised in Horatio, and which are conspicuous in all Addison's actions as well as in his writings :—

"Sir,—I am always as slow in making an Enemy as a Friend, and am therefore very ready to come to an Accommodation with you ; but as for any satisfaction, I don't think it is due on either side when y^e^ Affront is mutual. You know very well that according to y^e^ opinion of y^e^ world a man would as soon be called a Knave as a fool, and I believe most people w^d^ be rather thought to want Legs than Brains. But I suppose whatever we said in y^e^ heat of discourse is not y^e^ real opinion we have of each other, since otherwise you would have scorned to subscribe yourself as I do at present, S^r^, y^r^ very, etc.

A. Mons^r^ L'Espagnol,
Blois, 10^br^ 1699."

The length of Addison's sojourn at Blois seems to have been partly caused by the difficulty he experienced, owing to the defectiveness of his memory, in mastering the language. Finding himself at last able to converse easily, he returned to Paris some time in the autumn of 1700, in order to see a little of polite society there before starting on his travels in Italy. He found the best company in the capital among the men of letters, and he makes especial mention of Malebranche, whom he describes as solicitous about the adequate rendering of his works into English; and of Boileau, who, having now survived almost all his literary friends, seems, in his conversation with Addison, to have been even more than usually splenetic in his judgments on his contemporaries. The old poet and critic was, however, propitiated with the present of the *Musæ Anglicanæ;* and, according to Tickell, said "that he did not question there were excellent compositions in the native language of a country that possessed the Roman genius in so eminent a degree."

In general, Addison's remarks on the French character are not complimentary. He found the vanity of the people so elated by the elevation of the Duke of Anjou to the throne of Spain that they were insupportable, and he felt no reluctance to quit France for Italy. His observations on the national manners, as seen at Blois, are characteristic:—

"Truly by what I have yet seen, they are the Happiest nation in the world. 'Tis not in the pow'r of Want or Slavery to make 'em miserable. There is nothing to be met with in the Country but Mirth and Poverty. Ev'ry one sings, laughs, and starves. Their Conversation is generally Agreeable; for if they have any Wit or Sense they are sure to show it. They never mend upon a Second meeting, but

use all the freedom and familiarity at first Sight that a long Intimacy or Abundance of wine can scarce draw from an Englishman. Their Women are perfect Mistresses in this Art of showing themselves to the best Advantage. They are always gay and sprightly, and set off y^e^ worst faces in Europe with y^e^ best airs. Ev'ry one knows how to give herself as charming a look and posture as S^r^ Godfrey Kneller c^d^ draw her in."[1]

He embarked from Marseilles for Genoa in December 1700, having as his companion Edward Wortley Montague, whom Pope satirises under the various names of Shylock, Worldly, and Avidien. It is unnecessary to follow him step by step in his travels, but the reader of his *Letter to Lord Halifax* may still enjoy the delight and enthusiasm to which he gives utterance on finding himself among the scenes described in his favourite authors:—

> "Poetic fields encompass me around,
> And still I seem to tread on classic ground;
> For here the Muse so oft her harp has strung,
> That not a mountain rears its head unsung;
> Renowned in verse each shady thicket grows,
> And every stream in heavenly numbers flows."[2]

The phrase "classic ground," which has become proverbial, is first used in these verses, and, as will have been observed, Pope repeats it with evident reference to the above passage in his satire on the travels of the "young Æneas." Addison seems to have carried the Latin poets with him, and his quotations from them are abundant and apposite. When he is driven into the harbour at Monaco, he remembers Lucan's description of its safety and shelter; as he passes under Monte Circeo,

[1] Letter to the Right Honourable Charles Montague, Esq., Blois, 10^br^ 1699.

[2] Letter from Italy to Lord Halifax.

he feels that Virgil's description of Æneas' voyage by the same spot can never be sufficiently admired; he recalls, as he crosses the Apennines, the fine lines of Claudian recording the march of Honorius from Ravenna to Rome; and he delights to think that at the falls of the Velino he can still see the "angry goddess" of the *Æneid* (Alecto) "thus sinking, as it were, in a tempest, and plunging herself into Hell" amidst such a scene of horror and confusion.

His enthusiastic appreciation of the classics, which caused him in judging any work of art to look in the first place for regularity of design and simplicity of effect, shows itself characteristically in his remarks on the Lombard and German styles of architecture in Italy. Of Milan Cathedral he speaks without much admiration, but he was impressed with the wonders of the Certosa near Pavia. "I saw," says he, "between Pavia and Milan the convent of the Carthusians, which is very spacious and beautiful. Their church is very fine and curiously adorned, *but* of a Gothic structure." His most interesting criticism, however, is that on the Duomo at Siena:—

"When a man sees the prodigious pains and expense that our forefathers have been at in these barbarous buildings, one cannot but fancy to himself what miracles of architecture they would have left us had they only been instructed in the right way, for when the devotion of those ages was much warmer than that of the present, and the riches of the people much more at the disposal of the priests, there was so much money consumed on these Gothic cathedrals as would have finished a greater variety of noble buildings than have been raised either before or since that time. One would wonder to see the vast labour that has been laid out on this single cathedral. The very spouts are loaden with ornaments, the windows are formed like so

many scenes of perspective, with a multitude of little pillars retiring behind one another, the great columns are finely engraven with fruits and foliage, that run twisting about them from the very top to the bottom; the whole body of the church is chequered with different lays of black and white marble, the pavement curiously cut out in designs and Scripture stories, and the front covered with such a variety of figures, and overrun with so many mazes and little labyrinths of sculpture, that nothing in the world can make a prettier show to those who prefer false beauties and *affected ornaments* to a noble and majestic simplicity."[1]

Addison had not reached that large liberality in criticism afterwards attained by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who, while insisting that in all art there was but *one* true style, nevertheless allowed very high merit to what he called the *characteristic* styles. Sir Joshua would never have fallen into the error of imputing affectation to such simple and honest workmen as the early architects of Northern Italy. The effects of Addison's classical training are also very visible in his descriptions of natural scenery. There is in these nothing of that craving melancholy produced by a sense of the infinity of nature which came into vogue after the French Revolution; no projection of the feelings of the spectator into the external scene on which he gazes; nor, on the other hand, is there any attempt to rival the art of the painter by presenting a landscape in words instead of in colours. He looks on nature with the same clear sight as the Greek and Roman writers, and in describing a scene he selects those particulars in it which he thinks best adapted to arouse pleasurable images in the mind of the reader. Take, for instance, the following excellent description of his passage over the Apennines :—

[1] Addison's *Works* (Tickell's edition), vol. v. p. 301.

"The fatigue of our crossing the Apennines, and of our whole journey from Loretto to Rome, was very agreeably relieved by the variety of scenes we passed through. For, not to mention the rude prospect of rocks rising one above another, of the deep gutters worn in the sides of them by torrents of rain and snow-water, or the long channels of sand winding about their bottoms, that are sometimes filled with so many rivers: we saw in six days' travelling the several seasons of the year in their beauty and perfection. We were sometimes shivering on the top of a bleak mountain, and a little while afterwards basking in a warm valley, covered with violets and almond trees in blossom, the bees already swarming over them, though but in the month of February. Sometimes our road led us through groves of olives, or by gardens of oranges, or into several hollow apartments among the rocks and mountains, that look like so many natural greenhouses; as being always shaded with a great variety of trees and shrubs that never lose their verdure." [1]

Though his thoughts during his travels were largely occupied with objects chiefly interesting to his taste and imagination, and though he busied himself with such compositions as the *Epistle from Italy*, the *Dialogue on Medals*, and the first four acts of *Cato*, he did not forget that his experience was intended to qualify him for taking part in the affairs of State. And when he reached Geneva, in December 1701, the door to a political career seemed to be on the point of opening. He there learned, as Tickell informs us, that he had been selected to attend the army under Prince Eugene as secretary from the King. He accordingly waited in the city for official confirmation of this intelligence; but his hopes were doomed to disappointment. William III. died in March 1702; Halifax, on whom Addison's prospects chiefly depended, was struck off the Privy Council by Queen Anne; and

[1] Addison's *Works* (Tickell's edition), vol. v. p. 213.

the travelling pension ceased with the life of the sovereign who had granted it. Henceforth he had to trust to his own resources, and though the loss of his pension does not seem to have compelled him at once to turn homewards, as he continued on his route to Vienna, yet an incident that occurred towards the close of his travels shows that he was prepared to eke out his income by undertaking work that would have been naturally irksome to him.

At Rotterdam, on his return towards England, he met with Jacob Tonson, the bookseller, for whom, as has been said, he had already done some work as a translator. Tonson was one of the founders of the Kit-Kat Club, and in that capacity was brought into frequent and intimate connection with the Whig magnates of the day. Among these was the Duke of Somerset, who, through his wife, then high in Queen Anne's favour, exercised considerable influence on the course of affairs. The Duke required a tutor for his son, Lord Hertford, and Tonson recommended Addison. On the Duke's approval of the recommendation, the bookseller seems to have communicated with Addison, who expressed himself in general terms as willing to undertake the charge of Lord Hertford, but desired to know more particulars about his engagement. These were furnished by the Duke in a letter to Tonson, and they are certainly a very curious illustration of the manners of the period. "I ought," says his Grace, "to enter into that affair more freely and more plainly, and tell you what I propose, and what I hope he will comply with—viz. I desire he may be more on the account of a companion in my son's travels than as a governor, and that

as such I shall account him: my meaning is that neither lodging, travelling, nor diet shall cost him sixpence, and over and above that, my son shall present him at the year's end with a hundred guineas, as long as he is pleased to continue in that service to my son, by his personal attendance and advice, in what he finds necessary during his time of travelling."

To this not very tempting proposal Addison replied: "I have lately received one or two advantageous offers of y^e^ same nature, but as I should be very ambitious of executing any of your Grace's commands, so I can't think of taking y^e^ like employ from any other hands. As for y^e^ recompense that is proposed to me, I must take the liberty to assure your Grace that I should not see my account in it, but in y^e^ hope that I have to recommend myself to your Grace's favour and approbation." This reply proved highly offensive to the Duke, who seems to have considered his own offer a magnificent one. "Your letter of the 16th," he writes to Tonson on June 22, 1703, "with one from Mr. Addison, came safe to me. You say he will give me an account of his readiness of complying with my proposal. I will set down his own words, which are thus: 'As for the recompense that is proposed to me, I must confess I can by no means see my account in it,' etc. All the other parts of his letter are compliments to me, which he thought he was bound in good breeding to write, and as such I have taken them, and no otherwise; and now I leave you to judge how ready he is to comply with my proposal. Therefore I have wrote by this first post to prevent his coming to England on my account, and have told him plainly that I must look for another, which I cannot be long a-finding."

Addison's principal biographer, Miss Aikin, expresses great contempt for the niggardliness of the Duke, and says that "Addison must often have congratulated himself in the sequel on that exertion of proper spirit by which he had escaped from wasting in an attendance little better than servile three precious years, which he found means of employing so much more to his own honour and satisfaction, and to the advantage of the public." Mean as the Duke's offer was, it is nevertheless plain that Addison really intended to accept it, and, this being so, he can scarcely be congratulated on having on this occasion displayed his usual tact and felicity. Two courses appear to have been open to him. He might either have simply declined the offer "as not finding his account in it," or he might have accepted it in view of the future advantages which he hoped to derive from the Duke's "favour and approbation," in which case he should have said nothing about finding the "recompense" proposed insufficient. By the course that he took he contrived to miss an appointment which he seems to have made up his mind to accept, and he offended an influential statesman whose favour he was anxious to secure.

To his pecuniary embarrassments was soon added domestic loss. At Amsterdam he received news of his father's death, and it may be supposed that the private business in which he must have been involved in consequence of this event brought him to England, where he arrived some time in the autumn of 1703.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS EMPLOYMENT IN AFFAIRS OF STATE.

ADDISON'S fortunes were now at their lowest ebb. The party from which he had looked for preferment was out of office; his chief political patron was in particular discredit at Court; his means were so reduced that he was forced to adopt a style of living not much more splendid than that of the poorest inhabitants of Grub Street. Yet within three years of his return to England he was promoted to be an Under-Secretary of State, a post from which he mounted to one position of honour after another till his final retirement from political life. That he was able to take advantage of the opportunity that offered itself was owing to his own genius and capacity; the opportunity was the fruit of circumstances which had produced an entire revolution in the position of English men of letters.

Through the greater part of Charles II.'s reign the profession of literature was miserably degraded. It is true that the King himself, a man of wit and taste, was not slow in his appreciation of art; but he was by his character insensible to what was serious or elevated, and the poetry of gallantry, which he preferred, was quite within reach of the courtiers by whom he was surrounded.

Rochester, Buckingham, Sedley, and Dorset are among the principal poetical names of the period; all of them being well qualified to shine in verse, the chief requirements of which were a certain grace of manner, an air of fashionable breeding, and a complete disregard of the laws of decency. Besides these "songs by persons of quality," the principal entertainment was provided by the drama. But the stage, seldom a lucrative profession, was then crowded with writers whose fertile, if not very lofty, invention kept down the price of plays. Otway, the most successful dramatist of his time, died in a state of indigence, and as some say almost of starvation, while playwrights of less ability, if the house was ill-attended on the third night, when the poet received all the profits of the performance, were forced, as Oldham says, "to starve or live in tatters all the year."[1]

Periodical literature, in the shape of journals and magazines, had as yet no existence; nor could the satirical poet or the pamphleteer find his remuneration in controversial writing, the strong reaction against Puritanism having raised the monarchy to a position in which it was practically secure against the assaults of all its enemies. The author of the most brilliant satire of the period, who had used all the powers of a rich imagination to discredit the Puritan and Republican cause, was paid with nothing more solid than admiration, and died neglected and in want.

"The wretch, at summing up his misspent days,
Found nothing left but poverty and praise!
Of all his gains by verse he could not save
Enough to purchase flannel and a grave!

[1] Oldham's Satire *Dissuading from Poetry*.

Reduced to want he in due time fell sick,
Was fain to die, and be interred on tick;
And well might bless the fever that was sent
To rid him hence, and his worse fate prevent."[1]

In the latter part of this reign, however, a new combination of circumstances produced a great change in the character of English literature and in the position of its professors. The struggle of Parties recommenced. Wearied with the intolerable rule of the Saints, the nation had been at first glad to leave its newly-restored King to his pleasures, but, as the memories of the Commonwealth became fainter, the people watched with a growing feeling of disgust the selfishness and extravagance of the Court, while the scandalous sale of Dunkirk and the sight of the Dutch fleet on the Thames made them think of the patriotic energies which Cromwell had succeeded in arousing. At the same time the thinly-disguised inclination of the King to Popery, and the avowed opinions of his brother, raised a general feeling of alarm for the Protestant liberties of the nation. On the other hand, the Puritans, taught moderation by adversity, exhibited the really religious side of their character, and attracted towards themselves a considerable portion of the aristocracy, as well as of the commercial and professional classes in the metropolis—a combination of interests which helped to form the nucleus of the Whig party. The clergy and the landed proprietors, who had been the chief sufferers from Parliamentary rule, naturally adhered to the Court, and were nicknamed by their opponents Tories. Violent party conflicts ensued, marked by such incidents as the Test Act, the Exclusion Bill, the intrigues

[1] Oldham's Satire *Dissuading from Poetry*.

of Monmouth, the Popish Plot, and the trial and acquittal of Shaftesbury on the charge of high treason.

Finding his position no longer so easy as at his restoration, Charles naturally bethought him of calling literature to his assistance. The stage, being completely under his control, seemed the readiest instrument for his purpose; the order went forth; and an astonishing display of monarchical fervour in all the chief dramatists of the time—Otway, Dryden, Lee, and Crowne—was the result. Shadwell, who was himself inclined to the Whig interest, laments the change:

> "The stage, like old Rump pulpits, is become
> The scene of News, a furious Party's drum."

But the political influence of the drama and the audience to which it appealed being necessarily limited, the King sought for more powerful literary artillery, and he found it in the serviceable genius of Dryden, whose satirical and controversial poems date from this period. The wide popularity of *Absalom and Achitophel*, written against Monmouth and Shaftesbury; of *The Medal*, satirising the acquittal of Shaftesbury; of *The Hind and Panther*, composed to advance the Romanising projects of James II.; points to the vast influence exercised by literature in the party struggle. Nevertheless, in spite of all that Dryden had done for the Royal cause, in spite of the fact that he himself had more than once appealed to the poet for assistance, the ingratitude or levity of Charles was so inveterate that he let the poet's services go almost unrequited. Dryden, it is true, held the posts of Laureate and Royal Historiographer, but his salary was always in arrears, and the letter which he addressed to Rochester,

First Lord of the Treasury, asking for six months' payment of what was due to him tells its own story.

James II. cared nothing for literature, and was probably too dull of apprehension to understand the incalculable service that Dryden had rendered to his cause. He showed his appreciation of the Poet-Laureate's genius by deducting £100 from the salary which his brother had promised him, and by cutting off from the emoluments of the office the time-honoured butt of canary!

Under William III. the complexion of affairs again altered. The Court, in the old sense of the word, ceased to be a paramount influence in literature. William III. derived his authority from Parliament; he knew that he must support it mainly by his sword and his statesmanship. A stranger to England, its manners and its language, he showed little disposition to encourage letters. Pope, indeed, maliciously suggests that he had the bad taste to admire the poetry of Blackmore, whom he knighted; but, as a matter of fact, the honour was conferred on the worthy Sir Richard in consequence of his distinction in medicine, and he himself bears witness to William's contempt for poetry.

> "Reverse of Louis he, example rare,
> Loved to deserve the praise he could not bear.
> He shunned the acclamations of the throng,
> And always coldly heard the poet's song.
> Hence the great King the Muses did neglect,
> And the mere poet met with small respect."[1]

Such political verse as we find in this reign generally consists, like Halifax's *Epistle to Lord Dorset*, or Addison's own *Address to King William*, of hyperbolical

[1] Blackmore, *The Kit-Kats.*

flattery. Opposition was extinct, for both parties had for the moment united to promote the Revolution, and the only discordant notes amid the chorus of adulation proceeded from Jacobite writers concealed in the garrets and cellars of Grub Street. Such an atmosphere was not favourable to the production of literature of an elevated or even of a characteristic order.

Addison's return to England coincided most happily with another remarkable turn of the tide. Leaning decidedly to the Tory party, who were now strongly leavened with the Jacobite element, Anne had not long succeeded to the throne before she seized an opportunity for dismissing the Whig Ministry whom she found in possession of office. The Whigs, equally alarmed at the influence acquired by their rivals, and at the danger which threatened the Protestant succession, neglected no effort to counterbalance the loss of their sovereign's favour by strengthening their credit with the people. Having been trained in a school which had at least qualified them to appreciate the influence of style, the aristocratic leaders of the party were well aware of the advantages they would derive by attracting to themselves the services of the ablest writers of the day. Hence they made it their policy to mingle with men of letters on an equal footing, and to hold out to them an expectation of a share in the advantages to be reaped from the overthrow of their rivals.

The result of this union of forces was a great increase in the number of literary-political clubs. In its half-aristocratic, half-democratic constitution, the club was the natural product of enlarged political freedom, and helped to extend the organisation of polite opinion beyond the

narrow orbit of Court society. Addison himself, in his simple style, points out the nature of the fundamental principle of Association which he observed in operation all around him. "When a set of men find themselves agree in any particular, though never so trivial, they establish themselves into a kind of fraternity, and meet once or twice a week upon the account of such a fantastic resemblance."[1] Among these societies, in the first years of the eighteenth century, the most celebrated was perhaps the Kit-Kat Club. It consisted of thirty-nine of the leading men of the Whig party; and, though many of these were of the highest rank, it is a characteristic fact that the founder of the club should have been the bookseller Jacob Tonson. It was probably through his influence, joined to that of Halifax, that Addison was elected a member of the society soon after his return to England. Among its prominent members was the Duke of Somerset, the first meeting between whom and Addison, after the correspondence that had passed between them, must have been somewhat embarrassing. The club assembled at one Christopher Catt's, a pastry-cook, who gave his name both to the society and the mutton-pies which were its ordinary entertainment. Each member was compelled to select a lady as his toast, and the verses which he composed in her honour were engraved on the wine-glasses belonging to the club. Addison chose the Countess of Manchester, whose acquaintance he had made in Paris, and complimented her in the following lines:—

"While haughty Gallia's dames, that spread
O'er their pale cheeks an artful red,

[1] *Spectator*, No. 9.

Beheld this beauteous stranger there,
In native charms divinely fair,
Confusion in their looks they showed,
And with unborrowed blushes glowed."

Circumstances seemed now to be conspiring in favour of the Whigs. The Tories, whose strength lay mainly in the Jacobite element, were jealous of Marlborough's ascendency over the Queen; on the other hand, the Duchess of Marlborough, who was rapidly acquiring the chief place in Anne's affections, intrigued in favour of the opposite faction. In spite, too, of her Tory predilections, the Queen, finding her throne menaced by the ambition of Louis XIV., was compelled in self-defence to look for support to the party which had most vigorously identified itself with the principles of the Revolution. She bestowed her unreserved confidence on Marlborough, and he, in order to counterbalance the influence of the Jacobites, threw himself into the arms of the Whigs. Being named Captain-General in 1704, he undertook the campaign which he brought to so glorious a conclusion on the 2d of August in that year at the battle of Blenheim.

Godolphin, who in the absence of Marlborough occupied the chief place in the Ministry, moved perhaps by patriotic feeling, and no doubt also by a sense of the advantage which his party would derive from this great victory, was anxious that it should be commemorated in adequate verse. He accordingly applied to Halifax as the person to whom the *sacer vates* required for the occasion would probably be known. Halifax has had the misfortune to have his character transmitted to posterity by two poets who hated him either on public or

private grounds. Swift describes him as the would-be "Mæcenas of the nation," but insinuates that he neglected the wants of the poets whom he patronised:

> "Himself as rich as fifty Jews,
> Was easy though they wanted shoes."

Pope also satirises the vanity and meanness of his disposition in the well-known character of Bufo. Such portraits, though they are justified to some extent by evidence coming from other quarters, are not to be too strictly examined as if they bore the stamp of historic truth. It is, at any rate, certain that Halifax always proved himself a warm and zealous friend to Addison, and when Godolphin applied to him for a poet to celebrate Blenheim, he answered that, though acquainted with a person who possessed every qualification for the task, he could not ask him to undertake it. Being pressed for his reasons, he replied "that while too many fools and blockheads were maintained in their pride and luxury at the public expense, such men as were really an honour to their age and country were shamefully suffered to languish in obscurity; that, for his own share, he would never desire any gentleman of parts and learning to employ his time in celebrating a Ministry who had neither the justice nor the generosity to make it worth his while." In answer to this the Lord Treasurer assured Halifax that any person whom he might name as equal to the required task, should have no cause to repent of having rendered his assistance; whereupon Halifax mentioned Addison, but stipulated that all advances to the latter must come from Godolphin himself. Accordingly Boyle, Chancellor of the Exchequer, afterwards Lord Carleton, was despatched

on the embassy, and, if Pope is to be trusted, found Addison lodged up three pair of stairs over a small shop. He opened to him the subject, and informed him that, in return for the service that was expected of him, he was instructed to offer him a Commissionership of Appeal in the Excise, as a pledge of more considerable advancement in the future. The fruits of this negotiation were *The Campaign*.

Warton disposes of the merits of *The Campaign* with the cavalier criticism, so often since repeated, that it is merely "a gazette in rhyme." In one sense the judgment is no doubt just. As a poem, *The Campaign* shows neither loftiness of invention nor enthusiasm of personal feeling, and it cannot therefore be ranked with such an ode as Horace's *Qualem ministrum*, or with Pope's very fine *Epistle* to the Earl of Oxford after his disgrace. Its methodical narrative style is scarcely misrepresented by Warton's sarcastic description of it; but it should be remembered that this style was adopted by Addison with deliberate intention. "Thus," says he, in the conclusion of the poem,

> "Thus would I fain Britannia's wars rehearse
> In the smooth records of a faithful verse;
> That, if such numbers can o'er time prevail,
> May tell posterity the wondrous tale.
> When actions unadorned are faint and weak
> Cities and countries must be taught to speak;
> Gods may descend in factions from the skies,
> And rivers from their oozy beds arise;
> Fiction may deck the truth with spurious rays,
> And round the hero cast a borrowed blaze.
> Marlbro's exploits appear divinely bright,
> And proudly shine in their own native light;
> Raised in themselves their genuine charms they boast,
> And those that paint them truest praise them most."

The design here avowed is certainly not poetical, but it is eminently business-like and extremely well adapted to the end in view. What Godolphin wanted was a set of complimentary verses on Marlborough. Addison, with infinite tact, declares that the highest compliment that can be paid to the hero is to recite his actions in their unadorned grandeur. This happy turn of flattery shows how far he had advanced in literary skill since he wrote his address *To the King*. He had then excused himself for the inadequate celebration of William's deeds on the plea that, great though these might be, they were too near the poet's own time to be seen in proper focus. A thousand years hence, he suggests, some Homer may be inspired by the theme "and Boyne be sung when it has ceased to flow." This could not have been very consolatory to a mortal craving for contemporary applause, and the apology offered in *The Campaign* for the prosaic treatment of the subject is far more dexterous. Bearing in mind the fact that it was written to order, and that the poet deliberately declined to avail himself of the aid of fiction, we must allow that the construction of the poem exhibits both art and dignity. The allusion to the vast slaughter at Blenheim in the opening paragraph—

> "Rivers of blood I see and hills of slain,
> An Iliad rising out of one campaign"—

is not very fortunate; but the lines describing the ambition of Louis XIV. are weighty and dignified, and the couplet indicating through the single image of the Danube the vast extent of the French encroachments shows how thoroughly Addison was imbued with the spirit of classical poetry:

"The rising Danube its long race began,
And half its course through the new conquests ran."

With equal felicity he describes the position and intervention of England, seizing at the same time the opportunity for a panegyric on her free institutions:

"Thrice happy Britain from the kingdoms rent
To sit the guardian of the Continent!
That sees her bravest sons advanced so high
And flourishing so near her prince's eye;
Thy favourites grow not up by fortune's sport,
Or from the crimes and follies of a court:
On the firm basis of desert they rise,
From long-tried faith and friendship's holy ties,
Their sovereign's well-distinguished smiles they share,
Her ornaments in peace, her strength in war;
The nation thanks them with a public voice,
By showers of blessings Heaven approves their choice;
Envy itself is dumb, in wonder lost,
And factions strive who shall applaud them most."

He proceeds in a stream of calm and equal verse, enlivened by dexterous allusions and occasional happy turns of expression to describe the scenery of the Moselle; the march between the Maese and the Danube; the heat to which the army was exposed; the arrival on the Neckar; and the track of devastation left by the French armies. The meeting between Marlborough and Eugene inspires him again to raise his style:

"Great souls by instinct to each other turn,
Demand alliance, and in friendship burn,
A sudden friendship, while with outstretched rays
They meet each other mingling blaze with blaze.
Polished in courts, and hardened in the field,
Renowned for conquest, and in council skilled,

Their courage dwells not in a troubled flood
Of mounting spirits and fermenting blood;
Lodged in the soul, with virtue overruled,
Inflamed by reason, and by reason cooled,
In hours of peace content to be unknown
And only in the field of battle shown;
To souls like these in mutual friendship joined
Heaven dares entrust the cause of human kind."

The celebrated passage describing Marlborough's conduct at Blenheim is certainly the finest in the poem:

"'Twas then great Marlborough's mighty soul was proved
That in the shock of charging hosts unmoved,
Amidst confusion, horror, and despair
Examined all the dreadful scenes of war;
In peaceful thought the field of death surveyed
To fainting squadrons sent the timely aid,
Inspired repulsed battalions to engage,
And taught the doubtful battle where to rage.
So when an angel by divine command
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,
Such as of late o'er pale Britannia past,
Calm and serene he drives the furious blast;
And pleased th' Almighty's orders to perform,
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm."

Johnson makes some characteristic criticisms on this simile, which indeed, he maintains, is not a simile, but "an exemplification." He says: "Marlborough is so like the angel in the poem that the action of both is almost the same, and performed by both in the same manner. Marlborough 'teaches the battle to rage;' the angel 'directs the storm;' Marlborough is 'unmoved in peaceful thought;' the angel is 'calm and serene;' Marlborough stands 'unmoved amid the shock of hosts;' the angel rides 'calm in the whirlwind.' The lines on Marl-

borough are just and noble; but the simile gives almost the same images a second time."

This judgment would be unimpeachable if the force of the simile lay solely in the likeness between Marlborough and the angel, but it is evident that equal stress is to be laid on the resemblance between the battle and the storm. It was Addison's intention to raise in the mind of the reader the noblest possible idea of composure and design in the midst of confusion: to do this he selected an angel as the minister of the divine purpose, and a storm as the symbol of fury and devastation; and, in order to heighten his effect, he recalls with true art the violence of the particular tempest which had recently ravaged the country. Johnson has noticed the close similarity between the persons of Marlborough and the angel; but he has exaggerated the resemblance between the actions in which they are severally engaged.

The Campaign completely fulfilled the purpose for which it was written. It strengthened the position of the Whig Ministry, and secured for its author the advancement that had been promised him. Early in 1706 Addison, on the recommendation of Lord Godolphin, was promoted from the Commissionership of Appeals in Excise to be Under-Secretary of State to Sir Charles Hedges. The latter was one of the few Tories who had retained their position in the Ministry since the restoration of the Whigs to the favour of their sovereign, and he, too, shortly vanished from the stage like his more distinguished friends, making way for the Earl of Sunderland, a staunch Whig, and son-in-law to the Duke of Marlborough.

Addison's duties as Under-Secretary were probably not particularly arduous. In 1705 he was permitted to attend Lord Halifax to the Court of Hanover, whither the latter was sent to carry the Act for the Naturalisation of the Electress Sophia. The mission also included Vanbrugh, who, as Clarencieux King-at-Arms, was charged to invest the Elector with the Order of the Garter; the party thus constituted affording a remarkable illustration of the influence exercised by literature over the politics of the period. Addison must have obtained during this journey considerable insight into the nature of England's foreign policy, as, besides establishing the closest relations with Hanover, Halifax was also instructed to form an alliance with the United Provinces for securing the succession of the House of Brunswick to the English throne.

In the meantime his imagination was not idle. After helping Steele in the composition of his *Tender Husband*, which was acted in 1705, he found time for engaging in a fresh literary enterprise of his own. The principles of operatic music, which had long been developed in Italy, had been slow in making their way to this country. Their introduction had been delayed partly by the French prejudices of Charles II., but more perhaps by the strong insular tastes of the people and by the vigorous forms of the native drama. What the untutored English audience liked best to hear was a well-marked tune sung in a fine natural way: the kind of music which was in vogue on the stage till the end of the seventeenth century was simply the regular drama interspersed with airs; *recitative* was unknown; and there was no attempt to culti

vate the voice according to the methods practised in the Italian schools. But with the increase of wealth and travel more exacting tastes began to prevail: Italian singers appeared on the stage and exhibited to the audience capacities of voice of which they had hitherto had no experience. In 1705 was acted at the Haymarket *Arsinoe*, the first opera constructed in England on avowedly Italian principles. The words were still in English, but the dialogue was throughout in *recitative*. The composer was Thomas Clayton, who, though a man entirely devoid of genius, had travelled in Italy, and was eager to turn to account the experience which he had acquired. In spite of its badness *Arsinoe* greatly impressed the public taste; and it was soon followed by *Camilla*, a version of an opera by Bononcini, portions of which were sung in Italian and portions in English, an absurdity on which Addison justly comments in a number of the *Spectator*. His remarks on the consequences of translating the Italian operas are equally humorous and just.

"As there was no great danger," says he, "of hurting the sense of these extraordinary pieces, our authors would often make words of their own which were entirely foreign to the meaning of the passages they pretended to translate; their chief care being to make the numbers of the English verse answer to those of the Italian, that both of them might go to the same tune. Thus the famous song in *Camilla*:

'Barbara si t'intendo,' etc.
'Barbarous woman, yes, I know your meaning.'

which expresses the resentment of an angry lover, was translated into that English lamentation—

'Frail are a lover's hopes,' etc.

And it was pleasant enough to see the most refined persons

of the British nation dying away and languishing to notes that were filled with the spirit of rage and indignation. It happened also very frequently where the sense was rightly translated, the necessary transposition of words, which were drawn out of the phrase of one tongue into that of another, made the music appear very absurd in one tongue that was very natural in the other. I remember an Italian verse that ran thus, word for word :

'And turned my rage into pity,

which the English for rhyme's sake translated,

'And into pity turned my rage.'

By this means the soft notes that were adapted to pity in the Italian fell upon the word 'rage' in the English; and the angry sounds that were turned to rage in the original were made to express pity in the translation. It oftentimes happened likewise that the finest notes in the air fell upon the most insignificant word in the sentence. I have known the word 'and' pursued through the whole gamut; have been entertained with many a melodious 'the;' and have heard the most beautiful graces, quavers, and divisions bestowed upon 'then,' 'for,' and 'from,' to the eternal honour of our English particles."[1]

Perceiving these radical defects, Addison seems to have been ambitious of showing by example how they might be remedied. "The great success this opera (*Arsinoe*) met with produced," says he, "some attempts of forming pieces upon Italian plans, which should give a more natural and reasonable entertainment than what can be met with in the elaborate trifles of that nation. This alarmed the poetasters and fiddlers of the town, who were used to deal in a more ordinary kind of ware; and therefore laid down an established rule, which is received as such to this day, 'That nothing is capable of being well set to music that is not nonsense.'"[2] The

[1] *Spectator*, No. 18. [2] *Ibid.*

allusion to the failure of the writer's own opera of *Rosamond* is unmistakable. The piece was performed on the 2d of April 1706, but was coldly received, and after two or three representations was withdrawn.

The reasons which the *Spectator* assigns for the catastrophe betray rather the self-love of the author than the clear perception of the critic. *Rosamond* failed because, in the first place, it was very bad as a musical composition. Misled by the favour with which *Arsinoe* was received, Addison seems to have regarded Clayton as a great musician, and he put his poem into the hands of the latter, thinking that his score would be as superior to that of *Arisinoe* as his own poetry was to the words of that opera. Clayton, however, had no genius, and only succeeded in producing what Sir John Hawkins, quoting with approbation the words of another critic, calls "a confused chaos of music, the only merit of which is its shortness."[1]

But it may be doubted whether in any case the most skilful composer could have produced music of a high order adapted to the poetry of *Rosamond*. The play is neither a tragedy, a comedy, nor a melodrama. It seems that Eleanor did not really poison Fair Rosamond, but only administered to her a sleeping potion, and, as she takes care to explain to the King,

> "The bowl with drowsy juices filled,
> From cold Egyptian drugs distilled,
> In borrowed death has closed her eyes."

This information proves highly satisfactory to the King, not only because he is gratified to find that Rosamond is

[1] Sir John Hawkins' *History of Music*, vol. v. p. 137.

not dead, but also because, even before discovering her supposed dead body, he had resolved, in consequence of a dream sent to him by his guardian angel, to terminate the relations existing between them. The Queen and he accordingly arrange in a business-like manner that Rosamond shall be quietly removed in her trance to a nunnery; a reconciliation is then effected between the husband and wife, who, as we are led to suppose, live happily ever after.

The main motive of the opera in Addison's mind appears to have been the desire of complimenting the Marlborough family. It is dedicated to the Duchess; the warlike character of Henry naturally recalls the prowess of the great modern captain; and the King is consoled by his guardian angel for the loss of Fair Rosamond with a vision of the future glories of Blenheim:

"To calm thy grief and lull thy cares
Look up and see
What, after long revolving years,
Thy bower shall be!
When time its beauties shall deface,
And only with its ruins grace
The future prospect of the place!
Behold the glorious pile ascending,
Columns swelling, arches bending,
Domes in awful pomp arising,
Art in curious strokes surprising,
Foes in figured fights contending,
Behold the glorious pile ascending."

This is graceful enough, but it scarcely offers material for music of a serious kind. Nor can the Court have been greatly impressed by the compliment paid to its morality as contrasted with that of Charles II., conveyed

as it was by the mouth of Grideline, one of the comic characters in the piece—

"Since conjugal passion
Is come into fashion,
And marriage so blest on the throne is,
Like a Venus I'll shine,
Be fond and be fine,
And Sir Trusty shall be my Adonis."

The ill success of *Rosamond* confirmed Addison's dislike to the Italian opera, which he displayed both in his grave and humorous papers on the subject in the *Spectator*. The disquisition upon the various actors of the lion in *Hydaspes* is one of his happiest inspirations; but his serious criticisms are, as a rule, only just in so far as they are directed against the dramatic absurdities of the Italian opera. As to his technical qualifications as a critic of music, it will be sufficient to cite the opinion of Dr. Burney:—"To judges of music nothing more need be said of Mr. Addison's abilities to decide concerning the comparative degrees of national excellence in the art, and the merit of particular masters, than his predilection for the productions of Clayton and insensibility to the force and originality of Handel's compositions in *Rinaldo*."[1]

In December 1708 the Earl of Sunderland was displaced to make room for the Tory Lord Dartmouth, and Addison, as Under-Secretary, following the fortunes of his superior, found himself again without employment. Fortunately for him the Earl of Wharton was almost immediately afterwards made Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and offered him the lucrative post of Secretary. The Earl, who was

[1] Burney's *History of Music*, vol. iv. p. 203.

subsequently created a Marquis, was the father of the famous Duke satirised in Pope's first *Moral Essay;* he was in every respect the opposite of Addison—a vehement Republican, a sceptic, unprincipled in his morals, venal in his methods of Government. He was nevertheless a man of the finest talents, and seems to have possessed the power of gaining personal ascendency over his companions by a profound knowledge of character. An acquaintance with Addison, doubtless commencing at the Kit-Kat Club, of which both were members, had convinced him that the latter had eminent qualifications for the task, which the Secretary's post would involve, of dealing with men of very various conditions. Of the feelings with which Addison on his side regarded the Earl we have no record. "It is reasonable to suppose," says Johnson, "that he counteracted, as far as he was able, the malignant and blasting influence of the Lieutenant; and that, at least, by his intervention some good was done and some mischief prevented." Not a shadow of an imputation, at any rate, rests upon his own conduct as Secretary. He appears to have acted strictly on that conception of public duty which he defines in one of his papers in the *Spectator.* Speaking of the marks of a corrupt official, "Such an one," he declares, "is the man who upon any pretence whatsoever, receives more than what is the stated and unquestioned fee of his office. Gratifications, tokens of thankfulness, despatch money, and the like specious terms, are the pretences under which corruption very frequently shelters itself. An honest man will, however, look on all these methods as unjustifiable, and will enjoy himself better in a moderate fortune that is gained with honour and reputation, than

in an overgrown estate that is cankered with the acquisitions of rapine and exaction. Were all our offices discharged with such an inflexible integrity, we should not see men in all ages, who grow up to exorbitant wealth, with the abilities which are to be met with in an ordinary mechanic."[1] His friends perhaps considered that his impartiality was somewhat overstrained, since he always declined to remit the customary fees in their favour. "For," said he, "I may have forty friends, whose fees may be two guineas a-piece; then I lose eighty guineas, and my friends gain but two a-piece."

He took with him as his own Secretary, Eustace Budgell, who was related to him, and for whom he seems to have felt a warm affection. Budgell was a man of considerable literary ability, and was the writer of the various papers in the *Spectator* signed "X.," some of which succeed happily in imitating Addison's style. While he was under his friend's guidance his career was fairly successful, but his temper was violent, and when, at a later period of his life, he served in Ireland under a new Lieutenant and another Secretary, he became involved in disputes which led to his dismissal. A furious pamphlet against the Lord-Lieutenant, the Duke of Bolton, published by him in spite of Addison's remonstrances, only complicated his position, and from this period his fortunes steadily declined. He lost largely in the South Sea Scheme; spent considerable sums in a vain endeavour to obtain a seat in Parliament; and at last came under the influence of his kinsman, Tindal, the well-known deist, whose will he is accused of having falsified. With his usual infelicity he happened to rouse the resentment

[1] *Spectator*, No. 469.

of Pope, and was treated in consequence to one of the deadly couplets with which that great poet was in the habit of repaying real or supposed injuries:

> "Let Budgell charge low Grub Street on his quill,
> And write whate'er he pleased,—except his will."

The lines were memorable, and were doubtless often quoted, and the wretched man finding his life insupportable, ended it by drowning himself in the Thames.

During his residence in Ireland Addison firmly cemented his friendship with Swift, whose acquaintance he had probably made after *The Campaign* had given him a leading position in the Whig party, on the side of which the sympathies of both were then enlisted. Swift's admiration for Addison was warm and generous. When the latter was on the point of embarking on his new duties, Swift wrote to a common friend, Colonel Hunter:—"Mr. Addison is hurrying away for Ireland, and I pray too much business may not spoil *le plus honnete homme du monde*." To Archbishop King he wrote:—"Mr. Addison, who goes over our first secretary, is a most excellent person, and being my intimate friend I shall use all my credit to set him right in his notions of persons and things." Addison's duties took him occasionally to England, and during one of his visits Swift writes to him from Ireland:—"I am convinced that whatever Government come over you will find all marks of kindness from any parliament here with respect to your employment; the Tories contending with the Whigs which should speak best of you. In short, if you will come over again when you are at leisure we will raise an army and make you King of Ireland. Can you

think so meanly of a kingdom as not to be pleased that every creature in it, who hath one grain of worth, has a veneration for you?" In his *Journal to Stella* he says, under date of October 12, 1710: "Mr. Addison's election has passed easy and undisputed; and I believe if he had a mind to be chosen king he would hardly be refused." On his side Addison's feelings were equally warm. He presented Swift with a copy of his *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*, inscribing it—"To the most agreeable companion, the truest friend, and the greatest genius of his age."

This friendship, founded on mutual respect, was destined to be impaired by political differences. In 1710 the credit of the Whig Ministry had been greatly undermined by the combined craft of Harley and Mrs. Masham, and Swift, who was anxious as to his position, on coming over to England to press his claims on Somers and Halifax, found that they were unable to help him. He appears to have considered that their want of power proceeded from want of will; at any rate, he made advances to Harley, which were of course gladly received. The Ministry were at this time being hard pressed by the *Examiner*, under the conduct of Prior, and at their instance Addison started the *Whig Examiner* in their defence. Though this paper was written effectively and with admirable temper, party polemics were little to the taste of its author, and, after five numbers, it ceased to exist on the 8th of October. Swift, now eager for the triumph of the Tories, expresses his delight to Stella by informing her, in the words of a Tory song, that "it was down among the dead men." He himself wrote the first of his *Examiners* on the 2d of the following Novem-

ber, and the crushing blows with which he followed it up did much to hasten the downfall of the Ministry. As was natural, Addison was somewhat displeased at his friend's defection. In December Swift writes to Stella:—"Mr. Addison and I are as different as black and white, and I believe our friendship will go off by this d—— business of party. He cannot bear seeing me fall in so with the Ministry; but I love him still as much as ever, though we seldom meet." In January 1710-11, he says: "I called at the coffee-house, where I had not been in a week, and talked coldly awhile with Mr. Addison; all our friendship and dearness are off; we are civil acquaintance, talk words of course, of when we shall meet, and that's all. Is it not odd?" Many similar entries follow; but on June 26, 1711, the record is:—"Mr. Addison and I talked as usual, and as if we had seen one another yesterday." And on September 14, he observes:—"This evening I met Addison and pastoral Philips in the Park, and supped with them in Addison's lodgings. We were very good company, and I yet know no man half so agreeable to me as he is. I sat with them till twelve."

It was perhaps through the influence of Swift, who spoke warmly with the Tory Ministry on behalf of Addison, that the latter, on the downfall of the Whigs in the autumn of 1710, was for some time suffered to retain the Keepership of the Records in Bermingham's Tower, an Irish place which had been bestowed upon him by the Queen as a special mark of the esteem with which she regarded him, and which appears to have been worth £400 a year.[1] In other respects his fortunes were greatly

[1] Fourth Drapier's Letter.

altered by the change of Ministry. "I have within this twelvemonth," he writes to Wortley on the 21st of July 1711, "lost a place of £2000 per ann., an estate in the Indies worth £14,000, and, what is worse than all the rest, my mistress.[1] Hear this and wonder at my philosophy! I find they are going to take away my Irish place from me too; to which I must add that I have just resigned my fellowship, and that stocks sink every day." In spite of these losses his circumstances were materially different from those in which he found himself after the fall of the previous Whig Ministry in 1702. Before the close of the year 1711 he was able to buy the estate of Bilton, near Rugby, for £10,000. Part of the purchase money was probably provided from what he had saved while he was Irish Secretary and had invested in the funds; and part was, no doubt, made up from the profits of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. Miss Aikin says that a portion was advanced by his brother Gulston; but this seems to be an error. Two years before, the Governor of Fort St. George, had died, leaving him his executor and residuary legatee. This is no doubt "the estate in the Indies" to which he refers in his letter to Wortley, but he had as yet derived no benefit from it. His brother had left his affairs in great confusion; the trustees were careless or dishonest; and though about £600 was remitted to him in the shape of diamonds in 1713, the liquidation was not complete till 1716, when only a small moiety of the sum bequeathed to him came into his hands.[2]

[1] Who the "mistress" was cannot be certainly ascertained. See, however, p. 154.

[2] Egerton MSS., British Museum (1972).

CHAPTER V.

THE *TATLER* AND *SPECTATOR*.

THE career of Addison, as described in the preceding chapters, has exemplified the great change effected in the position of men of letters in England by the Restoration and the Revolution; it is now time to exhibit him in his most characteristic light, and to show the remarkable service the eighteenth century essayists performed for English society in creating an organised public opinion. It is difficult for ourselves, who look on the action of the periodical press as part of the regular machinery of life, to appreciate the magnitude of the task accomplished by Addison and Steele in the pages of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. Every day, week, month, and quarter, now sees the issue of a vast number of journals and magazines intended to form the opinion of every order and section of society. But in the reign of Queen Anne the only centres of society that existed were the Court, with the aristocracy that revolved about it, and the clubs and coffee-houses, in which the commercial and professional classes met to discuss matters of general interest. The *Tatler* and *Spectator* were the first organs in which an attempt was made to give form and consistency to the opinion arising out of this social

contact. But we should form a very erroneous idea of the character of these publications if we regarded them as the sudden productions of individual genius, written in satisfaction of a mere temporary taste. Like all masterpieces in art and literature, they mark the final stage of a long and painful journey, and the merit of their inventors consists largely in the judgment with which they profited by the experience of many predecessors.

The first newspaper published in Europe was the *Gazzetta* of Venice, which was written in manuscript, and read aloud at certain places in the city to supply information to the people during the war with the Turks in 1536. In England it was not till the reign of Elizabeth that the increased facilities of communication and the growth of wealth caused the purveyance of news to become a profitable employment. Towards the end of the sixteenth century newsmongers began to issue little pamphlets reporting extraordinary intelligence, but not issued at regular periods. The titles of these publications, which are all of them that survive, show that the arts with which the framers of the placards of our own newspapers endeavour to attract attention are of venerable antiquity: "Wonderful and Strange newes out of Suffolke and Essex, where it rained wheat the space of six or seven miles," 1583; "Lamentable newes out of Monmouthshire, containinge the wonderfull and fearfull accounts of the great overflowing of the waters in the said countrye," 1607.[1]

In 1622 one Nathaniel Butter began to publish a newspaper bearing a fixed title and appearing at stated intervals. It was called the *Weekly Newes from Italy and*

[1] Andrews' *History of British Journalism.*

Germanie, etc.; and was said to be printed for *Mercurius Britannicus*. This novelty provided much food for merriment to the poets, and Ben Jonson in his *Staple of News* satirises Butter, under the name of Nathaniel, in a passage which the curious reader will do well to consult, as it shows the low estimation in which newspapers were then held.[1]

Though it might appear from Jonson's dialogue that the newspapers of that day contained many items of domestic intelligence, such was scarcely the case. Butter and his contemporaries, as was natural to men who confined themselves to the publication of news without attempting to form opinion, obtained their materials almost entirely from abroad, whereby they at once aroused more vividly the imagination of their readers, and doubtless gave more scope to their own invention. Besides they were not at liberty to retail home news of that political kind which would have been of the greatest interest to the public. For a long time the evanescent character of the newspaper allowed it to escape the attention of the licenser, but the growing demand for this sort of reading at last brought it under supervision, and so strict was the control exercised over even the reports of foreign intelligence that its weekly appearance was frequently interrupted.

In 1641, however, the Star-chamber was abolished, and the heated political atmosphere of the times generated a new species of journal, in which we find the first attempt to influence opinion through the periodical press. This was the newspaper known under the generic title of *Mercury*. Many weekly publications of

[1] *Staple of News*, Act I. Scene 2.

this name appeared during the Civil Wars on the side of both King and Parliament, *Mercurius Anlicus* being the representative organ of the Royalist cause, and *Mercurius Pragmaticus* and *Mercurius Politicus* of the Republicans. Party animosities were thus kept alive, and proved so inconvenient to the Government that the Parliament interfered to curtail the liberty of the press. In 1647 an ordinance passed the House of Lords prohibiting any person from "making, writing, printing, selling, publishing, or uttering, or causing to be made, any book, sheet, or sheets of news whatsoever, except the same be licensed by both or either House of Parliament, with the name of the author, printer, and licenser affixed." In spite of this prohibition, which was renewed by Act of Parliament in 1662, many unlicensed periodicals continued to appear, till in 1663 the Government, finding their repressive measures insufficient, resolved to grapple with the difficulty by monopolising the right to publish news.

The author of this new project was the well-known Roger L'Estrange, who in 1663 obtained a patent assigning to him "all the sole privilege of writing, printing, and publishing all Narratives, Advertisements, Mercuries, Intelligencers, Diurnals, and other books of public intelligence." L'Estrange's journal was called the *Public Intelligencer;* it was published once a week, and in its form was a rude anticipation of the modern newspaper, containing as it did an obituary, reports of the proceedings in Parliament and in the Court of Claims, a list of the circuits of the judges, of sheriffs, Lent preachers, etc. After being continued for two years it gave place first, in 1665, to the *Oxford*

Gazette, published at Oxford, whither the Court had retired during the plague; and in 1666 to the *London Gazette*, which was under the immediate control of an Under-Secretary of State. The office of Gazetteer became henceforth a regular ministerial appointment, and was viewed with different eyes according as men were affected towards the Government. Steele, who held it, says of it: "My next appearance as a writer was in the quality of the lowest Minister of State—to wit, in the office of Gazetteer; where I worked faithfully according to order, without ever erring against the rule observed by all Ministers, to keep that paper very innocent and very insipid." Pope, on the other hand, who regarded it as an organ published to influence opinion in favour of the Government, is constant in his attacks upon it, and has immortalised it in the memorable lines in the *Dunciad* beginning: "Next plunged a feeble but a desperate pack," etc.

In 1679 the Licensing Act passed in 1662 expired, and the Parliament declined to renew it. The Court was thus left without protection against the expression of public opinion, which was daily becoming more bold and outspoken. In his extremity the King fell back on the servility of the judges, and, having procured from them an opinion that the publishing of any printed matter without license was contrary to the common law, he issued his famous Proclamation in 1680 "to prohibit and forbid all persons whatsoever to print or publish any news, book, or pamphlets of news, not licensed by his Majesty's authority."

Disregard of the proclamation was treated as a breach of the peace, and many persons were punished accord-

ingly. This severity produced the effect intended. The voice of the periodical press was stifled, and the *London Gazette* was left almost in exclusive possession of the field of news. When Monmouth landed in 1685 the King managed to obtain from Parliament a renewal of the Licensing Act for seven years, and even after the Revolution of 1688 several attempts were made by the Ministerial Whigs to prolong or to renew the operation of the Act. In spite, however, of the violence of the organs of "Grub Street," which had grown up under it, these attempts were unsuccessful; it was justly felt that it was wiser to leave falsehood and scurrility to be gradually corrected by public opinion as speaking through an unfettered press, than to attack them by a law which they had proved themselves able to defy. From 1682 the freedom of the press may therefore be said to date, and the lapse of the Licensing Act was the signal for a remarkable outburst of journalistic enterprise and invention. Not only did the newspapers devoted to the report of foreign intelligence reappear in greatly increased numbers, but, whereas the old *Mercuries* had never been published more than once in the same week, the new comers made their appearance twice and sometimes even three times. In 1702 was printed the first daily newspaper, *The Daily Courant*. It could only at starting provide material to cover one side of a half sheet of paper; but the other side was very soon covered with printed matter, in which form its existence was prolonged till 1735.

The development of party government of course encouraged the controversial capacities of the journalist, and many notorious, and some famous names are now

found among the combatants in the political arena. On the side of the Whigs the most redoubtable champions were Daniel Defoe, of the *Review*, who was twice imprisoned and once set in the pillory for his political writings; John Tutchin, of the *Observator;* and Ridpath, of the *Flying Post*—all of whom have obtained places in the *Dunciad*. The old Tories appear to have been satisfied during the early part of Queen Anne's reign with prosecuting the newspapers that attacked them; but Harley, who understood the power of the press, engaged Prior to harass the Whigs in the *Examiner*, and was afterwards dexterous enough to secure the invaluable assistance of Swift for the same paper. In opposition to the *Examiner* in its early days the Whigs, as has been said, started the *Whig Examiner*, under the auspices of Addison, so that the two great historical parties had their cases stated by the two greatest prose-writers of the first half of the eighteenth century.

Beside the Quidnunc and the party politician, another class of reader now appeared demanding aliment in the press. Men of active and curious minds, with a little leisure and a large love of discussion, loungers at Will's or at the Grecian Coffee-Houses, were anxious to have their doubts on all subjects resolved by a printed oracle. Their tastes were gratified by the ingenuity of John Dunton, whose strange account of his *Life and Errors* throws a strong light on the literary history of this period. In 1690 Dunton published his *Athenian Gazette*, the name of which he afterwards altered to the *Athenian Mercury*. The object of this paper was to answer questions put to the editor by the public. These were of all kinds on religion, casuistry, love, literature, and

manners, no question being too subtle or absurd to extract a reply from the conductor of the paper. The *Athenian Mercury* seems to have been read by as many distinguished men of the period as *Notes and Queries* in our own time, and there can be no doubt that the quaint humours it originated gave the first hint to the inventors of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*.

Advertisements were inserted in the newspapers at a comparatively early period of their existence. The editor acted as middleman between the advertiser and the public, and made his announcements in a style of easy frankness which will appear to the modern reader extremely refreshing. Thus in the "Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade" (1682) there are the following:—

"If I can meet with a sober man that has a counter-tenor voice, I can help him to a place worth thirty pound the year or more.

"If any noble or other gentleman wants a porter that is very lusty, comely, and six foot high and two inches, I can help.

"I want a complete young man that will wear a livery, to wait on a very valuable gentleman; but he must know how to play on a violin or flute.

"I want a genteel footman that can play on the violin, to wait on a person of honour." [1]

Everything was now prepared for the production of a class of newspaper designed to form and direct public opinion on rational principles. The press was emancipated from State control; a reading public had constituted itself out of the *habitués* of the coffee-houses and clubs; nothing was wanted but an inventive genius to adapt the materials at his disposal to the circumstances

[1] Andrews' *History of British Journalism*.

of the time. The required hero was not long in making his appearance.

Richard Steele, the son of an official under the Irish Government, was, above all things, "a creature of ebullient heart." Impulse and sentiment were with him always far stronger motives of action than reason, principle, or even interest. He left Oxford, without taking a degree, from an ardent desire to serve in the army, thereby sacrificing his prospect of succeeding to a family estate; his extravagance and dissipation while serving in the cavalry were notorious; yet this did not dull the clearness of his moral perceptions, for it was while his excesses were at their height that he dedicated to his commanding officer, Lord Cutts, his *Christian Hero*. Vehement in his political, as in all other feelings, he did not hesitate to resign the office he held under the Tory Government in 1711 in order to attack it for what he considered its treachery to the country; but he was equally outspoken, and with equal disadvantage to himself, when he found himself at a later period in disagreement with the Whigs. He had great fertility of invention, strong natural humour, true though uncultivated taste, and inexhaustible human sympathy.

His varied experience had made him well acquainted with life and character, and in his office of Gazetteer he had had an opportunity of watching the eccentricities of the public taste, which, now emancipated from restraint, began vaguely to feel after new ideals. That, under such circumstances, he should have formed the design of treating current events from a humorous point of view was only natural, but he was indebted for the form of his newspaper to the most original genius of the age. Swift

had early in the eighteenth century exercised his ironical vein by treating the everyday occurrences of life in a mock-heroic style. Among his pieces of this kind that were most successful in catching the public taste were the humorous predictions of the death of Partridge, the astrologer, signed with the name of Isaac Bickerstaff. Steele, seizing on the name and character of Partridge's fictitious rival, turned him with much pleasantry into the editor of a new journal, the design of which he makes Isaac describe as follows:—

"The state of conversation and business in this town having long been perplexed with Pretenders in both kinds, in order to open men's minds against such abuses, it appeared no unprofitable undertaking to publish a Paper, which should observe upon the manners of the pleasurable, as well as the busy part of mankind. To make this generally read, it seemed the most proper method to form it by way of a Letter of Intelligence, consisting of such parts as might gratify the curiosity of persons of all conditions and of each sex. . . . The general purposes of this Paper is to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour."[1]

The name of the *Tatler*, Isaac informs us, was "invented in honour of the fair sex," for whose entertainment the new paper was largely designed. It appeared three times a week, and its price was a penny, though it seems that the first number, published April 12, 1709, was distributed *gratis* as an advertisement. In order to make the contents of the paper varied it was divided into five portions, of which the editor gives the following account:—

"All accounts of Gallantry, Pleasure, and Entertainment, shall be under the article of White's Chocolate-House; Poetry

[1] *Tatler*, No. 1.

under that of Will's Coffee-House ; Learning under the title of Grecian ; Foreign and Domestic News you will have from Saint James' Coffee-House ; and what else I have to offer on any other subject shall be dated from my own apartment."[1]

In this division we see the importance of the coffee-houses as the natural centres of intelligence and opinion. Of the four houses mentioned, St. James's and White's, both of them in St. James's Street, were the chief haunts of statesmen and men of fashion, and the latter had acquired an infamous notoriety for the ruinous gambling of its *habitues*. Will's in Russell Street, Covent Garden, kept up the reputation which it had procured in Dryden's time as the favourite meeting-place of men of letters ; while the Grecian in Devereux Court in the Strand, which was the oldest coffee-house in London, afforded a convenient *rendezvous* for the learned Templars. At starting the design announced in the first number was adhered to with tolerable fidelity. The paper dated from St. James' Coffee-House was always devoted to the recital of foreign news ; that from Will's either criticised the current dramas, or contained a copy of verses from some author of repute, or a piece of general literary criticism ; the latest gossip at White's was reproduced in a fictitious form and with added colour. Advertisements were also inserted ; and half a sheet of the paper was left blank, in order that at the last moment the most recent intelligence might be added in manuscript after the manner of the contemporary news-letters. In all these respects the character of the newspaper was preserved ; but in the method of treating news adopted by the editor there was a constant tendency to subordinate matter of fact to the elements of humour, fiction, and sentiment. In

[1] *Tatler*, No. 1.

his survey of the manners of the time Isaac, as an astrologer, was assisted by a familiar spirit, named Pacolet, who revealed to him the motives and secrets of men; his sister, Mrs. Jenny Distaff, was occasionally deputed to produce the paper from the wizard's "own apartment;" and Kidney, the waiter at St. James' Coffee-House, was humorously represented as the chief authority in all matters of foreign intelligence.

The mottoes assumed by the *Tatler* at different periods of its existence mark the stages of its development. On its first appearance, when Steele seems to have intended it to be little more than a lively record of news, the motto placed at the head of each paper was—

"Quidquid agunt homines,
nostri est farrago libelli."

It soon became evident, however, that its true function was not merely to report the actions of men, but to discuss the propriety of their actions; and by the time that sufficient material had accumulated to constitute a volume, the essayists felt themselves justified in appropriating the words used by Pliny in the preface to his *Natural History*:—

"Nemo apud nos qui idem tentaverit: equidem sentio peculiarem in studiis causam eorum esse, qui difficultatibus victis, utilitatem juvandi, protulerunt gratiæ placendi. Res ardua vetustis novitatem dare, novis auctoritatem, obsoletis nitorem, fastidits gratiam, dubiis fidem, omnibus vero naturam, et naturæ suæ omnia. Itaque NON ASSECUTIS *voluisse*, abunde pulchrum atque magnificum est."

The disguise of the mock astrologer proved very useful to Steele in his character of moralist. It enabled him to give free utterance to his better feelings without the risk of incurring the charge of inconsistency or

hypocrisy, and nothing can be more honourable to him than the open manner in which he acknowledges his own unfitness for the position of a moralist: "I shall not carry my humility so far," says he, "as to call myself a vicious man, but at the same time must confess my life is at best but pardonable. With no greater character than this, a man would make but an indifferent progress in attacking prevailing and fashionable vices, which Mr. Bickerstaff has done with a freedom of spirit that would have lost both its beauty and efficacy had it been pretended to by Mr. Steele." [1]

As Steele cannot claim the sole merit of having invented the form of the *Tatler* so too it must be remembered that he could never have addressed society in the high moral tone assumed by Bickerstaff if the road had not been prepared for him by others. One name among his predecessors stands out with a special title to honourable record. Since the Restoration the chief school of manners had been the stage, and the flagrant example of immorality set by the Court had been bettered by the invention of the comic dramatists of the period. Indecency was the fashion; religion and sobriety were identified by the polite world with Puritanism and hypocrisy. Even the Church had not yet ventured to say a word in behalf of virtue against the prevailing taste, and when at last a clergyman raised his voice on behalf of the principles which he professed, the blow which he dealt to his antagonists was the more damaging because it was entirely unexpected. Jeremy Collier was not only a Tory but a Jacobite, not only a High Churchman but a Nonjuror,

[1] *Tatler*, No. 271.

who had been outlawed for his fidelity to the principles of Legitimism; and that such a man should have published the *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, reflecting, as the book did, in the strongest manner on the manners of the fallen dynasty, was as astounding as thunder from a clear sky. Collier, however, was a man of sincere piety, whose mind was for the moment occupied only by the overwhelming danger of the evil which he proposed to attack. It is true that his method of attack was cumbrous, and that his conclusions were far too sweeping and often unjust; nevertheless the general truth of his criticisms was felt to be irresistible. Congreve and Vanbrugh each attempted an apology for their profession; both, however, showed their perception of the weakness of their position by correcting or recasting scenes in their comedies to which Collier had objected. Dryden accepted the reproof in a nobler spirit. Even while he had pandered to the taste of the times he had been conscious of his treachery to the cause of true art, and had broken out in a fine passage in his *Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Killigrew*:—

"O gracious God! how far have we
Profaned thy heavenly gift of poesy!
Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,
Debased to each obscene and impious use!

. . . . . .

"O wretched we! why were we hurried down
This lubrique and adulterous age
(Nay, added fat pollutions of our own)
To increase the streaming ordure of the stage?"

When Collier attacked him he bent his head in submission. "In many things," says he, "he has taxed me justly, and I have pleaded guilty to all thought and ex-

pressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance."[1]

The first blow against fashionable immorality having been boldly struck, was followed up systematically. In 1690 was founded "The Society for the Reformation of Manners," which published every year an account of the progress made in suppressing profaneness and debauchery by its means. It continued its operations till 1738, and during its existence prosecuted, according to its own calculations, 101,683 persons. William III. showed himself prompt to encourage the movement which his subjects had begun. The *London Gazette* of 27th February 1698-9 contains a report of the following remarkable order:—

"His Majesty being informed, That, notwithstanding an order made the 4th of June 1697 by the Earl of Sunderland, then Lord Chamberlain of His Majesty's Household, to prevent the Prophaneness and Immorality of the Stage; several Plays have been lately acted containing expressions contrary to Religion and Good Manners: and whereas the Master of the Revels has represented, That, in contempt of the said order, the actors do often neglect to leave out such Prophane and Indecent expressions as he has thought proper to be omitted. These are therefore to signifie his Majesty's pleasure, that you do not hereafter presume to act anything in any play contrary to Religion and Good Manners as you shall answer it at your utmost peril. Given under my Hand this 18th of February 1698. In the eleventh year of his Majesty's reign."

It is difficult to realise in reading the terms of this order that only thirteen years had elapsed since the

[1] *Preface to the Fables.*

death of Charles II., and undoubtedly a very large share of the credit due for such a revolution in the public taste is to be assigned to Collier. Collier, however, did nothing in a literary or artistic sense to improve the character of English literature. His severity, uncompromising as that of the Puritans, inspired Vice with terror, but could not plead with persuasion on behalf of Virtue; his sweeping conclusions struck at the roots of Art as well as of Immorality. He sought to destroy the drama and kindred pleasures of the Imagination, not to reform them. What the age needed was a writer to satisfy its natural desires for healthy and rational amusement, and Steele with his strongly-developed two-fold character was the man of all others to bridge over the chasm between irreligious licentiousness and Puritanical rigidity. Driven headlong on one side of his nature towards all the tastes and pleasures which absorbed the Court of Charles II., his heart in the midst of his dissipation never ceased to approve of whatever was great, noble, and generous. He has described himself with much feeling in his disquisition on the *Rake*, a character which he says many men are desirous of assuming without any natural qualifications for supporting it:—

"A Rake," says he, "is a man always to be pitied; and if he lives one day is certainly reclaimed; for his faults proceed not from choice or inclination, but from strong passions and appetites, which are in youth too violent for the curb of reason, good sense, good manners, and good nature; all which he must have by nature and education before he can be allowed to be or to have been of this order. . . . His desires run away with him through the strength and force of a lively imagination, which hurries him on to unlawful pleasures before reason has power to come in to his rescue."

That impulsiveness of feeling which is here described, and which was the cause of so many of Steele's failings in real life, made him the most powerful and persuasive advocate of Virtue in fiction. Of all the imaginative English essayists he is the most truly natural. His large heart seems to rush out in sympathy with any tale of sorrow or exhibition of magnanimity; and, even in criticism, his true natural instinct, joined to his constitutional enthusiasm often raises his judgments to a level with those of Addison himself, as in his excellent essay in the *Spectator* on Raphael's cartoons. Examples of these characteristics in his style are to be found in the *Story of Unnion and Valentine*,[1] and in the fine paper describing two tragedies of real life;[2] in the series of papers on duelling, occasioned by a duel into which he was himself forced against his own inclination;[3] and in the sound advice which Isaac gives to his half-sister Jenny on the morrow of her marriage.[4] Perhaps, however, the chivalry and generosity of feeling which make Steele's writings so attractive are most apparent in the delightful paper containing the letter of Serjeant Hall from the camp before Mons. After pointing out to his readers the admirable features in the serjeant's simple letter, Steele concludes as follows :—

"If we consider the heap of an army, utterly out of all prospect of rising and preferment, as they certainly are, and such great things executed by them, it is hard to account for the motive of their gallantry. But to me, who was a cadet at the battle of Coldstream in Scotland when Monk charged at the head of the regiment now called Coldstream, from the victory of that day—I remember it as well as if it were yes-

[1] *Tatler*, No. 5.
[2] *Ib.*, No. 82.
[3] *Ib.*, Nos. 25, 26, 28, 29, 38, 39.
[4] *Ib.*, No. 85.

terday, I stood on the left of old West, who I believe is now at Chelsea — I say to me, who know very well this part of mankind, I take the gallantry of private soldiers to proceed from the same, if not from a nobler, impulse than that of gentlemen and officers. They have the same taste of being acceptable to their friends, and go through the difficulties of that profession by the same irresistible charm of fellowship and the communication of joys and sorrows which quickens the relish of pleasure and abates the anguish of pain. Add to this that they have the same regard to fame, though they do not expect so great a share as men above them hope for; but I will engage Serjeant Hall would die ten thousand deaths rather than that a word should be spoken at the Red Lettice, or any part of the Butcher Row, in prejudice to his courage or honesty. If you will have my opinion, then, of the Serjeant's letter, I pronounce the style to be mixed, but truly epistolary; the sentiment relating to his own wound in the sublime; the postscript of Pegg Hartwell in the gay; and the whole the picture of the bravest sort of men, that is to say, a man of great courage and small hopes." [1]

With such excellences of style and sentiment it is no wonder that the *Tatler* rapidly established itself in public favour. It was a novel experience for the general reader to be provided three times a week with entertainment that pleased his imagination without offending his sense of decency or his religious instincts. But a new hand shortly appeared in the *Tatler*, which was destined to carry the art of periodical essay-writing to a perfection beside which even the humour of Steele appears rude and unpolished. Addison and Steele had been friends since boyhood. They had been contemporaries at the Charter House, and, as we have seen, Steele had sometimes spent his holidays in the parsonage of Addison's father. He was a postmaster at Merton about the same time that his

[1] *Tatler*, No. 87.

friend was a Fellow of Magdalen. The admiration which he conceived for the hero of his boyhood lasted, as so often happens, through life; he exhibited his veneration for him in all places, and even when Addison indulged his humour at his expense he showed no resentment. Addison, on his side, seems to have treated Steele with a kind of gracious condescension. The latter was one of the few intimate friends to whom he unbent in conversation; and while he was Under-Secretary of State he aided him in the production of *The Tender Husband*, which was dedicated to him by the author. Of this play Steele afterwards declared with characteristic impulse that many of the most admired passages were the work of his friend, and that he "thought very meanly of himself that he had never publicly avowed it."

The authorship of the *Tatler* was at first kept secret to all the world. It is said that the hand of Steele discovered itself to Addison on reading in the fifth number a remark which he remembered to have himself made to Steele on the judgment of Virgil as shown in the appellation of "Dux Trojanus," which the Latin poet assigns to Æneas, when describing his adventure with Dido in the cave, in the place of the usual epithet of "pius" or "pater." Thereupon he offered his services as a contributor, and these were of course gladly accepted. The first paper sent by Addison to the *Tatler* was No. 18, wherein is displayed that inimitable art which makes a man appear infinitely ridiculous by the ironical commendation of his offences against right reason and good taste. The subject is the approaching peace with France, and it is noticeable that the article of foreign news, which had been treated in previous

Tatlers with complete seriousness, is here for the first time invested with an air of pleasantry. The distress of the news-writers at the prospect of peace is thus described:—

"There is another sort of gentlemen whom I am much more concerned for, and that is the ingenious fraternity of which I have the honour to be an unworthy member; I mean the news-writers of Great Britain, whether Post-men or Post-boys, or by what other name or title soever dignified or distinguished. The case of these gentlemen is, I think, more hard than that of the soldiers, considering that they have taken more towns and fought more battles. They have been upon parties and skirmishes when our armies have lain still, and given the general assault to many a place when the besiegers were quiet in their trenches. They have made us masters of several strong towns many weeks before our generals could do it, and completed victories when our greatest captains have been glad to come off with a drawn battle. Where Prince Eugene has slain his thousands Boyer has slain his ten thousands. This gentleman can indeed be never enough commended for his courage and intrepidity during this whole war: he has laid about him with an inexpressible fury, and, like offended Marius of ancient Rome, made such havoc among his countrymen as must be the work of two or three ages to repair. . . . It is impossible for this ingenious sort of men to subsist after a peace: every one remembers the shifts they were driven to in the reign of King Charles the Second, when they could not furnish out a single paper of news without lighting up a comet in Germany or a fire in Moscow. There scarce appeared a letter without a paragraph on an earthquake. Prodigies were grown so familiar that they had lost their name, as a great poet of that age has it. I remember Mr. Dyer, who is justly looked upon by all the foxhunters in the nation as the greatest statesman our country has produced, was particularly famous for dealing in whales, in so much that in five months' time (for I had the curiosity to examine his letters on that occasion) he brought three into the mouth of the river Thames, besides two porpusses and a sturgeon."

The appearance of Addison as a regular contributor to the *Tatler* gradually brought about a revolution in the character of the paper. For some time longer, indeed, articles continued to be dated from the different coffee-houses, but only slight efforts were made to distinguish the materials furnished from White's, Will's, or Isaac's own apartment. When the hundredth number was reached a fresh address is given at Shere Lane, where the astrologer lived, and henceforward the papers from White's and Will's grow extremely rare; those from the Grecian may be said to disappear; and the foreign intelligence, dated from St. James', whenever it is inserted, which is seldom, is as often as not made the text of a literary disquisition. Allegories become frequent, and the letters sent, or supposed to be sent, to Isaac at his home address furnish the material for many numbers. The Essay, in fact, or that part of the newspaper which goes to form public opinion, preponderates greatly over that portion which is devoted to the report of news. Spence quotes from a Mr. Chute: "I have heard Sir Richard Steele say that, though he had a greater share in the *Tatlers* than in the *Spectators*, he thought the news article in the first of these was what contributed much to their success."[1] Chute, however, seems to speak with a certain grudge against Addison, and the statement ascribed by him to Steele is intrinsically improbable. It is not very likely that, as the proprietor of the *Tatler*, he would have dispensed with any element in it that contributed to its popularity, yet after No. 100 the news articles are seldom found. The truth is that Steele recognised the superiority of Addi-

[1] Spence's *Anecdotes*, p. 325.

son's style, and, with his usual quickness, accommodated the form of his journal to the genius of the new contributor.

"I have only one gentleman," says he in the preface to the *Tatler*, "who will be nameless, to thank for any frequent assistance to me, which indeed it would have been barbarous in him to have denied to one with whom he has lived in intimacy from childhood, considering the great ease with which he is able to despatch the most entertaining pieces of this nature. This good office he performed with such force of genius, humour, wit, and learning, that I fared like a distressed prince who calls in a powerful neighbour to his aid; I was undone by my own auxiliary; when I had once called him in I could not subsist without dependence on him."

With his usual enthusiastic generosity Steele in this passage unduly depreciates his own merits to exalt the genius of his friend. A comparison of the amount of material furnished to the *Tatler* by Addison and Steele respectively shows that out of 271 numbers the latter contributed 188 and the former only 42. Nor is the disparity in quantity entirely balanced by the superior quality of Addison's papers. Though it was, doubtless, his fine workmanship and admirable method which carried to perfection the style of writing initiated in the *Tatler*, yet there is scarcely a department of essay-writing developed in the *Spectator* which does not trace its origin to Steele. It is Steele who first ventures to raise his voice against the prevailing dramatic taste of the age on behalf of the superior morality and art of Shakespeare's plays.

"Of all men living," says he in the eighth *Tatler*, "I pity players (who must be men of good understanding to be capable of being such) that they are obliged to repeat and

assume proper gestures for representing things of which their reason must be ashamed, and which they must disdain their audience for approving. The amendment of these low gratifications is only to be made by people of condition, by encouraging the noble representation of the noble characters drawn by Shakespeare and others, from whence it is impossible to return without strong impressions of honour and humanity. On these occasions distress is laid before us with all its causes and consequences, and our resentment placed according to the merit of the person afflicted. Were dramas of this nature more acceptable to the taste of the town, men who have genius would bend their studies to excel in them."

Steele, too, it was who attacked with all the vigour of which he was capable the fashionable vice of gambling. So severe were his comments on this subject in the *Tatler* that he raised against himself the fierce resentment of the whole community of sharpers, though he was fortunate enough at the same time to enlist the sympathies of the better part of society. "Lord Forbes," says Mr. Nichols, the antiquary, in his notes to the *Tatler*, "happened to be in company with the two military gentlemen just mentioned" (Major-General Davenport and Brigadier Bisset) "in St. James' Coffee-House when two or three well-dressed men, all unknown to his lordship or his company, came into the room, and in a public outrageous manner abused Captain Steele as the author of the *Tatler*. One of them, with great audacity and vehemence, swore that he would cut Steele's throat or teach him better manners. 'In this country,' said Lord Forbes, 'you will find it easier to cut a purse than to cut a throat.' His brother officers instantly joined with his lordship, and turned the cut-throats out of the coffee-house with every mark of disgrace."[1]

[1] *Tatler*, vol. iv. p. 545 (Nichol's edition).

The practice of duelling also, which had hitherto passed unreproved, was censured by Steele in a series of papers in the *Tatler*, which seemed to have been written on an occasion when, having been forced to fight much against his will, he had the misfortune dangerously to wound his antagonist.[1] The sketches of character studied from life, and the letters from fictitious correspondents, both of which form so noticeable a feature in the *Spectator*, appear roughly, but yet distinctly, drafted in the *Tatler*. Even the papers of literary criticism, afterwards so fully elaborated by Addison, are anticipated by his friend, who may fairly claim the honour to have been the first to speak with adequate respect of the genius of Milton.[2] In a word, whatever was perfected by Addison was begun by Steele; if the one has for ever associated his name with the *Spectator*, the other may justly appropriate the credit of the *Tatler*, a work which bears to its successor the same kind of relation that the frescoes of Masaccio bear, in point of dramatic feeling and style, to those of Raphael; the later productions deserving honour for finish of execution, the earlier for priority of invention.

The *Tatler* was published till the 2d of January 1710-11, and was discontinued, according to Steele's own account, because the public had penetrated his disguise, and he was therefore no longer able to preach with effect in the person of Bickerstaff. It may be doubted whether this was his real motive for abandoning the paper. He had been long known as its conductor, and that his readers had shown no disinclination to listen to him is proved not only by the large circulation of each number

[1] See p. 97, note 3.

[2] *Tatler*, No. 6.

of the *Tatler*, but by the extensive sale of the successive volumes of the collected papers at the high price of a guinea apiece. He was, in all probability, led to drop the publication by finding that the political element that the paper contained was a source of embarrassment to him. His sympathies were vehemently Whig; the *Tatler* from the beginning had celebrated the virtues of Marlborough and his friends, both directly and under cover of fiction; and he had been rewarded for his services with a commissionership of the Stamp-office. When the Whig Ministry fell in 1710, Harley, setting a just value on the abilities of Steele, left him in the enjoyment of his office and expressed his desire to serve him in any other way. Under these circumstances, Steele no doubt felt it incumbent on him to discontinue a paper which, both from its design and its traditions, would have tempted him into the expression of his political partialities.

For two months therefore "the censorship of Great Britain," as he himself expressed it, "remained in commission," until Addison and he once more returned to discharge the duties of the office in the *Spectator*, the first number of which was published on the 1st of March 1710-11. The *Tatler* had only been issued three times a week, but the conductors of the new paper were now so confident in their own resources and in the favour of the public that they undertook to bring out one number daily. The new paper at once exhibited the impress of Addison's genius, which had gradually transformed the character of the *Tatler* itself. The latter was originally, in every sense of the word, a newspaper, but the *Spectator* from the first indulged his humour at the expense of the clubs of Quidnuncs.

"There is," says he, "another set of men that I must likewise lay a claim to as being altogether unfurnished with ideas till the business and conversation of the day has supplied them. I have often considered these poor souls with an eye of great commiseration when I have heard them asking the first man they have met with whether there was any news stirring, and by that means gathering together materials for thinking. These needy persons do not know what to talk of till about twelve o'clock in the morning; for by that time they are pretty good judges of the weather, know which way the wind sets, and whether the Dutch mail be come in. As they lie at the mercy of the first man they meet, and are grave or impertinent all the day long, according to the notions which they have imbibed in the morning, I would earnestly entreat them not to stir out of their chambers till they have read this paper; and do promise them that I will daily instil into them such sound and wholesome sentiments as shall have a good effect on their conversation for the ensuing twelve hours."[1]

For these, and other men of leisure, a kind of paper differing from the *Tatler*, which proposed only to retail the various species of gossip in the coffee-houses, was required, and the new entertainment was provided by the original design of an imaginary club, consisting of several ideal types of character grouped round the central figure of the Spectator. They represent considerable classes or sections of the community, and are, as a rule, men of strongly marked opinions, prejudices, and foibles, which furnish inexhaustible matter of comment to the Spectator himself, who delivers the judgments of reason and common-sense. Sir Roger de Coverley, with his simplicity, his high sense of honour, and his old-world reminiscences, reflects the country gentleman of the best kind; Sir Andrew Freeport expresses the opinions of

[1] *Spectator*, No. 10.

the enterprising, hard-headed, and rather hard-hearted monied interest; Captain Sentry speaks for the army; the Templar for the world of taste and learning; the clergyman for theology and philosophy; while Will Honeycomb, the elderly man of fashion, gives the Spectator many opportunities for criticising the traditions of morality and breeding surviving from the days of the Restoration. Thus, instead of the division of places which determined the arrangement of the *Tatler*, the different subjects treated in the *Spectator* are distributed among a variety of persons: the Templar is substituted for the Grecian Coffee-House and Will's; Will Honeycomb takes the place of White's; and Captain Sentry, whose appearances are rare, stands for the more voluminous article on foreign intelligence published in the old periodical under the head of St. James's. The Spectator himself finds a natural prototype in Isaac Bickerstaff, but his character is drawn with a far greater finish and delicacy, and is much more essential to the design of the paper which he conducts, than was that of the old astrologer.

The aim of the *Spectator* was to establish a rational standard of conduct in morals, manners, art, and literature.

"Since," says he in one of his early numbers, "I have raised to myself so great an audience, I shall spare no pains to make their instruction agreeable and their diversion useful. For which reason I shall endeavour to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality, that my readers may, if possible, both ways find their account in the speculation of the day. And to the end that their virtue and discretion may not be short, transient, intermitting starts of thought, I have resolved to refresh their memories from day to day till

I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age has fallen. The mind that lies fallow but a single day sprouts up in follies that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous culture. It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses."[1]

Johnson, in his *Life of Addison*, says that the task undertaken in the *Spectator* was "first attempted by Casa in his book of *Manners*, and Castiglione in his *Courtier;* two books yet celebrated in Italy for purity and elegance, and which, if they are now less read, are neglected only because they have effected that reformation which their authors intended and their precepts now are no longer wanted." He afterwards praises the *Tatler* and *Spectator* by saying that they "adjusted, like Casa, the unsettled practice of daily intercourse by propriety and politeness; and, like La Bruyere, exhibited the characters and manners of the age." This commendation scarcely does justice to the work of Addison and Steele. Casa, a man equally distinguished for profligacy and politeness, merely codified in his *Galateo* the laws of good manners which prevailed in his age. He is the Lord Chesterfield of Italy. Castiglione gives instructions to the young courtier how to behave in such a manner as to make himself agreeable to his prince. La Bruyere's characters are no doubt the literary models of those which appear in the *Spectator*. But La Bruyere merely described what he saw, with admirable wit, urbanity, and scholarship, but without

[1] *Spectator*, No. 10.

any of the earnestness of a moral reformer. He could never have conceived the character of Sir Roger de Coverley; and, though he was ready enough to satirise the follies of society as an observer from the outside, to bring "philosophy out of closets and libraries, to dwell in clubs and assemblies," was far from being his ambition. He would probably have thought the publication of a newspaper scarcely consistent with his position as a gentleman.

A very large portion of the *Spectator* is devoted to reflections on the manners of women. Addison saw clearly how important a part the female sex was destined to play in the formation of English taste and manners. Removed from the pedestal of enthusiastic devotion on which they had been placed during the feudal ages, women were treated under the Restoration as mere playthings and luxuries. As manners became more decent they found themselves secured in their emancipated position, but destitute of serious and rational employment. It was Addison's object, therefore, to enlist the aid of female genius in softening, refining, and moderating the gross and conflicting tastes of a half-civilised society.

"There are none," he says, "to whom this paper will be more useful than to the female world. I have often thought there has not been sufficient pains taken in finding out proper employments and diversions for the fair ones. Their amusements seem contrived for them, rather as they are women, than as they are reasonable creatures; and are more adapted to the sex than to the species. The toilet is their great scene of business, and the right adjustment of their hair the principal employment of their lives. The sorting of a suit of ribands is reckoned a very good morning's work; and if they make an excursion to a mercer's or a toy shop, so great a fatigue makes them unfit for anything else all the day after.

Their more serious occupations are sewing and embroidery, and their greatest drudgery the preparations of jellies and sweetmeats. This, I say, is the state of ordinary women; though I know there are multitudes of those of a more elevated life and conversation, that move in an exalted sphere of knowledge and virtue, that join all the beauties of the mind to the ornaments of dress, and inspire a kind of awe and respect, as well as of love, into their male beholders. I hope to increase the number of these by publishing this daily paper, which I shall always endeavour to make an innocent, if not an improving entertainment, and by that means, at least, divert the minds of my female readers from greater trifles."[1]

To some of the vigorous spirits of the age the mild and social character of the *Spectator's* satire did not commend itself. Swift, who had contributed several papers to the *Tatler* while it was in its infancy, found it too feminine for his taste. "I will not meddle with the *Spectator*," says he in his *Journal to Stella*, "let him *fair sex* it to the world's end." Personal pique, however, may have done as much as a differing taste to depreciate the *Spectator* in the eyes of the author of the *Tale of a Tub*, for he elsewhere acknowledges its merits. "The *Spectator*," he writes to Stella, "is written by Steele, with Addison's help; it is often very pretty . . . but I never see him (Steele) or Addison." That part of the public to whom the paper was specially addressed read it with keen relish. In the ninety-second number a correspondent signing herself "Leonora"[2] writes:—

"Mr. Spectator,—Your paper is part of my tea-equipage; and my servant knows my humour so well that, calling for my breakfast this morning (it being past my usual hour), she answered, the *Spectator* was not yet come in, but the tea-kettle boiled, and she expected it every moment."

[1] *Spectator*, No. 10. [2] The writer was a Miss Shepherd.

In a subsequent number "Thomas Trusty" writes:—

"I constantly peruse your paper as I smoke my morning's pipe (though I can't forbear reading the motto before I fill and light), and really it gives a grateful relish to every whiff; each paragraph is fraught either with useful or delightful notions, and I never fail of being highly diverted or improved. The variety of your subjects surprises me as much as a box of pictures did formerly, in which there was only one face, that by pulling some pieces of isinglass over it was changed into a grave senator or a merry-andrew, a polished lady or a nun, a beau or a blackamoor, a prude or a coquette, a country squire or a conjuror, with many other different representations very entertaining (as you are), though still the same at the bottom."[1]

The *Spectator* was read in all parts of the country.

"I must confess," says Addison as his task was drawing to an end, "that I am not a little gratified and obliged by that concern which appears in this great city upon my present design of laying down this paper. It is likewise with much satisfaction that I find some of the most outlying parts of the kingdom alarmed upon this occasion, having received letters to expostulate with me about it from several of my readers of the remotest boroughs of Great Britain."[2]

With how keen an interest the public entered into the humour of the paper is shown by the following letter, signed "Philo-Spec":—

"I was this morning in a company of your well-wishers, when we read over, with great satisfaction, Tully's observations on action adapted to the British theatre, though, by the way, we were very sorry to find that you have disposed of another member of your club. Poor Sir Roger is dead, and the worthy clergyman dying; Captain Sentry has taken possession of a fair estate; Will Honeycomb has married a farmer's daughter; and the Templar withdraws himself into the business of his own profession."[3]

[1] *Spectator*, No. 134. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 553. [3] *Ibid.*, No. 542.

It is no wonder that readers anticipated with regret the dissolution of a society that had provided them with so much delicate entertainment. Admirably as the club was designed for maintaining that variety of treatment on which Mr. Trusty comments in the letter quoted above, the execution of the design is deserving of even greater admiration. The skill with which the grave speculations of the *Spectator* are contrasted with the lively observations of Will Honeycomb on the fashions of the age, and these again are diversified with papers descriptive of character or adorned with fiction, while the letters from the public outside form a running commentary on the conduct of the paper, cannot be justly appreciated without a certain effort of thought. But it may safely be said that, to have provided society day after day for more than two years with a species of entertainment which, nearly two centuries later, retains all its old power to interest and delight, is an achievement unique in the history of literature. Even apart from the exquisite art displayed in their grouping, the matter of many of the essays in the *Spectator* is still valuable. The vivid descriptions of contemporary manners; the inimitable series of sketches of Sir Roger de Coverley; the criticisms in the papers on *True and False Wit* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*; have scarcely less significance for ourselves than for the society for which they were immediately written.

Addison's own papers were 274 in number, as against 236 contributed by Steele. They were, as a rule, signed with one of the four letters C. L. I. O., either because, as Tickell seems to hint in his *Elegy*, they composed the name of one of the Muses, or, as later scholars have conjectured,

because they were respectively written from four different localities, viz. Chelsea, London, Islington, and the Office.

The sale of the *Spectator* was doubtless very large relatively to the number of readers in Queen Anne's reign. Johnson, indeed, computes the number sold daily to have been only sixteen hundred and eighty, but he seems to have overlooked what Addison himself says on the subject very shortly after the paper had been started: "My publisher tells me that there are already three thousand of them distributed every day."[1] This number must have gone on increasing with the growing reputation of the *Spectator*. When the Preface of the *Four Sermons* of Dr. Fleetwood, Bishop of Llandaff, was suppressed by order of the House of Commons, the *Spectator* printed it in its 384th number, thus conveying, as the Bishop said in a letter to Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury. "fourteen thousand copies of the condemned preface into people's hands that would otherwise have never seen or heard of it." Making allowance for the extraordinary character of the number, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the usual daily issue of the *Spectator* to readers in all parts of the kingdom would, towards the close of its career, have reached ten thousand copies. The separate papers were afterwards collected into octavo volumes, which were sold, like the volumes of the *Tatler*, for a guinea a-piece. Steele tells us that more than nine thousand copies of each volume were sold off.[2]

Nothing could have been better timed than the appearance of the *Spectator;* it may indeed be doubted whether it could have been produced with success at any other period. Had it been projected earlier, while

[1] *Spectator*, No. 10. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 555.

Addison was still in office, his thoughts would have been diverted to other subjects, and he would have been unlikely to survey the world with quite impartial eyes; had the publication been delayed it would have come before the public when the balance of all minds was disturbed by the dangers of the political situation. The difficulty of preserving neutrality under such circumstances was soon shown by the fate of the *Guardian*. Shortly after the *Spectator* was discontinued this new paper was designed by the fertile invention of Steele, with every intention of keeping it, like its predecessor, free from the entanglements of party. But it had not proceeded beyond the forty-first number when the vehement partizanship of Steele was excited by the Tory *Examiner;* in the 128th number appeared a letter, signed "An English Tory," calling for the demolition of Dunkirk, while soon afterwards, finding that his political feelings were hampered by the design on which the *Guardian* was conducted, he dropped it and replaced it with a paper called the *Englishman*. Addison himself, who had been a frequent contributor to the *Guardian*, did not aid in the *Englishman*, of the violent party tone of which he strongly disapproved. A few years afterwards the old friends and coadjutors in the *Tatler* and *Spectator* found themselves maintaining an angry controversy in the opposing pages of the *Old Whig* and the *Plebeian*.

CHAPTER VI.

CATO.

It is a peculiarity in Addison's life that Fortune, as if conspiring with the happiness of his genius, constantly furnished him with favourable opportunities for the exercise of his powers. The pension granted him by Halifax enabled him, while he was yet a young man, to add to his knowledge of classical literature an intimate acquaintance with the languages and governments of the chief European states. When his fortunes were at the lowest ebb on his return from his travels his introduction to Godolphin by Halifax, the consequence of which was *The Campaign*, procured him at once celebrity and advancement. The appearance of the *Tatler*, though due entirely to the invention of Steele, prepared the way for development of the genius that prevailed in the *Spectator*. But the climax of Addison's good fortune was certainly the successful production of *Cato*, a play which, on its own merits, might have been read with interest by the scholars of the time, but which could scarcely have succeeded on the stage if it had not been appropriated and made part of our national life by the violence of political passion.

Addison had not the genius of a dramatist. The grace, the irony, the fastidious refinement which give

him such an unrivalled capacity in describing and criticising the humours of men as a *spectator* did not qualify him for imaginative sympathy with their actions and passions. But, like most men of ability in that period, his thoughts were drawn towards the stage, and even in Dryden's lifetime he had sent him a play in manuscript asking him to use his interest to obtain its performance. The old poet returned it, we are told, "with many commendations, but with an expression of his opinion that on the stage it would not meet with its deserved success." Addison nevertheless persevered in his attempts, and during his travels he wrote four acts of the tragedy of *Cato*, the design of which, according to Tickell, he had formed while he was at Oxford, though he certainly borrowed many incidents in the play from a tragedy on the same subject which he saw performed at Venice.[1] It is characteristic, however, of the undramatic mood in which he executed his task that the last act was not written till shortly before the performance of the play, many years later. As early as 1703 the drama was shown to Cibber by Steele, who said that "whatever spirit Mr. Addison had shown in his writing it, he doubted that he would never have courage enough to let his *Cato* stand the censure of an English audience; that it had only been the amusement of his leisure hours in Italy, and was never intended for the stage." He seems to have remained of the same opinion on the very eve of the performance of the play. "When Mr. Addison," says Pope, as reported by Spence, "had finished his *Cato* he brought it to me, desired to have my sincere opinion of it, and left it with me for three or four days. I gave

[1] See Addison's *Works* (Tickell's edition), vol. v., p. 187.

him my opinion of it sincerely, which was 'that I thought he had better not act it, and that he would get reputation enough by only printing it.' This I said as thinking the lines well written, but the piece not theatrical enough. Sometime after Mr. Addison said 'that his own opinion was the same with mine, but that some particular friends of his whom he could not disoblige insisted on its being acted.'"[1]

Undoubtedly Pope was right in principle, and anybody who reads the thirty-ninth paper in the *Spectator* may see, not only that Addison was out of sympathy with the traditions of the English stage, but that his whole turn of thought disqualified him from comprehending the motives of dramatic composition. "The modern drama," says he, "excels that of Greece and Rome in the intricacy and disposition of the fable; but, what a Christian writer would be ashamed to own, falls infinitely short of it in the moral part of the performance." And the entire drift of the criticism that follows relates to the thought, the sentiment, and the expression of the modern drama, rather than to the really essential question, the nature of the action. It is false criticism to say that the greatest dramas of Shakespeare fail in morality as compared with those of the Greek tragedians. That the manner in which the moral is conveyed is different in each case is of course true, since the subjects of Greek tragedy were selected from Greek mythology, and were treated by Æschylus and Sophocles, at all events, in a religious spirit, whereas the plays of Shakespeare are only indirectly Christian, and produce their effect by an appeal to the individual conscience. None the less is it the case that

[1] Spence's *Anecdotes*, p. 196.

Macbeth, *Hamlet*, and *Lear* have for modern audiences a far deeper moral meaning than the *Agamemnon* or the *Œdipus Tyrannus*. The tragic motive in Greek tragedy is the impotence of man in the face of moral law or necessity; in Shakespeare's tragedies it is the corruption of the will, some sin of the individual against the law of God, which brings its own punishment. There was nothing in this principle of which a Christian dramatist need have been ashamed; and, as regards Shakespeare at any rate, it is evident that Addison's criticism is unjust.

It is, however, by no means undeserved in its application to the class of plays which grew up after the Restoration. Under that *régime* the moral spirit of the Shakespearian drama entirely disappears. The king, whose temper was averse to tragedy and whose taste had been formed on French models, desired to see every play end happily. "I am going to end a piece," writes Roger, Earl of Orrery, to a friend, "in the French style, because I have heard the King declare that he preferred their manner to our own." The greatest tragedies of the Elizabethan age were transformed to suit this new fashion; even King Lear obtained a happy deliverance from his sufferings in satisfaction of the requirements of an effeminate Court. Addison very wittily ridicules this false taste in the fortieth number of the *Spectator*. He is not less felicitous in his remarks on the sentiments and the style of the Caroline drama, though he does not sufficiently discriminate his censure, which he bestows equally on the dramatists of the Restoration and on Shakespeare. Two main characteristics appear in all the productions of the former epoch — the monarchical spirit and the fashion of gallantry. The names of the

plays speak for themselves: on the one hand, *The Indian Emperor*, *Aurengzebe*, *The Indian Queen*, *The Conquest of Granada*, *The Fate of Hannibal;* on the other, *Secret Love*, *Tyrannic Love*, *Love and Vengeance*, *The Rival Queens*, *Theodosius, or the Power of Love*, and numberless others of the same kind. In the one set of dramas the poet sought to arouse the passion of pity by exhibiting the downfall of persons of high estate; in the other he appealed to the sentiment of romantic passion. Such were the fruits of that taste for French romance which was encouraged by Charles II., and which sought to disguise the absence of genuine emotion by the turgid bombast of its sentiment and the epigrammatic declamation of its rhymed verse.

At the same time the taste of the nation having been once turned into French channels, a remedy for these defects was naturally sought for from French sources; and just as the school of Racine and Boileau set its face against the extravagances of the romantic coteries, so Addison and his English followers, adopting the principles of the French classicists, applied them to the reformation of the English theatre. Hence arose a great revival of respect for the poetical doctrines of Aristotle, regard for the unities of time and place, attention to the proprieties of sentiment and diction—in a word, for all those characteristics of style afterwards summed up in the phrase "correctness."

This habit of thought, useful as an antidote to extravagance, was not fertile as a motive of dramatic production. Addison worked with strict and conscious attention to his critical principles: the consequence is that his *Cato*, though superficially "correct," is a passionless and mechanical play. He had combated with reason the

"ridiculous doctrine in modern criticism, that writers of tragedy are obliged to an equal distribution of rewards and punishments, and an impartial execution of poetical justice."[1] But his reasoning led him on to deny that the idea of justice is an essential element in tragedy. "We find," says he, "that good and evil happen alike to all men on this side the grave; and, as the principle design of tragedy is to raise commiseration and terror in the minds of the audience, we shall defeat this great end if we always make virtue and innocence happy and successful. . . . The ancient writers of tragedy treated men in their plays as they are dealt with in the world, by making virtue sometimes happy and sometimes miserable, as they found it in the fable which they made choice of, or as it might affect their audience in the most agreeable manner."[2] But it is certain that the fable which the two greatest of the Greek tragedians "made choice of" was always of a religious nature, and that the idea of Justice was never absent from it; it is also certain that Retribution is a vital element in all the tragedies of Shakespeare. The notion that the essence of tragedy consists in the spectacle of a good man struggling with adversity is a conception derived through the French from the Roman Stoics; it is not found in the works of the greatest tragic poets.

This, however, was Addison's central motive, and this is what Pope, in his famous Prologue, assigns to him as his chief praise.

> "Our author shuns by vulgar springs to move
> The hero's glory or the virgin's love;
> In pitying love we but our weakness show,
> And wild ambition well deserves its woe.

[1] *Spectator*, No. 40. [2] *Ibid.*

Here tears shall flow from a more generous cause,
Such tears as patriots shed for dying laws:
He bids your breasts with ancient ardour rise
And calls forth Roman drops from British eyes.
Virtue confessed in human shape he draws,
What Plato thought, and godlike Cato was:
No common object to your sight displays,
But what with pleasure heav'n itself surveys;
A brave man struggling in the storms of fate,
And greatly falling with a falling state."

A falling state offers a tragic spectacle to the thought and the reason, but not one that can be represented on the stage so as to move the passions of the spectators. The character of Cato, as exhibited by Addison, is an abstraction, round which a number of other lay figures are skilfully grouped for the delivery of lofty and appropriate sentiments. Juba, the virtuous young prince of Numidia, the admirer of Cato's virtue, Portius and Marcus, Cato's virtuous sons, and Marcia, his virtuous daughter, are all equally admirable and equally lifeless. Johnson's criticism of the play leaves little to be said.

"About things," he observes, "on which the public thinks long it commonly attains to think right; and of *Cato* it has not been unjustly determined that it is rather a poem in dialogue than a drama, rather a succession of just sentiments in elegant language than a representation of natural affections, or of any state probable or possible in human life. Nothing here 'excites or assuages emotion;' here is 'no magical power of raising fantastic terror or wild anxiety.' The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow. Of the agents we have no care; we consider not what they are doing or what they are suffering; we wish only to know what they have to say. Cato is a being above our solicitude; a man of whom the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedless confidence. To the rest neither gods nor men can have much

attention, for there is not one among them that strongly attracts either affection or esteem. But they are made the vehicles of such sentiments and such expressions that there is scarcely a scene in the play which the reader does not wish to impress upon his memory."

To this it may be added that, from the essentially undramatic bent of Addison's genius, whenever he contrives a train of incident he manages to make it a little absurd. Dennis has pointed out with considerable humour the consequences of his conscientious adherence to the unity of place, whereby every species of action in the play, love-making, conspiracy, debating, and fighting, is made to take place in the 'large hall in the governor's palace of Utica.' It is strange that Addison's keen sense of the ridiculous, which inspired so happily his criticisms on the allegorical paintings at Versailles,[1] should not have shown him the incongruities which Dennis discerned; but, in truth, they pervade the atmosphere of the whole play. All the actors—the distracted lovers, the good young man, Juba, and the blundering conspirator, Sempronius—seem to be oppressed with an uneasy consciousness that they have a character to sustain and are not confident of coming up to what is expected of them. This is especially the case with Portius, a pragmatic young Roman, whose praiseworthy but futile attempts to unite the qualities of Stoical fortitude, romantic passion, and fraternal loyalty, exhibit him in a position of almost comic embarrassment. According to Pope, "the love part was flung in after, to comply with the popular taste;" but the removal of these scenes would make the play so remarkably barren of incident that it is a little difficult to credit the statement.

[1] See p. 45.

The deficiencies of *Cato* as an acting play were, however, more than counterbalanced by the violence of party spirit, which insisted on investing the comparatively tame sentiments assigned to the Roman champions of liberty with a pointed modern application. In 1713 the rage of the contending factions was at its highest point. The Tories were suspected, not without reason, of designs against the Act of Settlement; the Whigs, on the other hand, were still suffering in public opinion from the charge of having for their own advantage protracted the war with Louis XIV. Marlborough had been accused in 1711 of receiving bribes while commander-in-chief, and had been dismissed from all his employments. Disappointment, envy, revenge, and no doubt a genuine apprehension for the public safety, inspired the attacks of the Whigs upon their rivals; and when it was known that Addison had in his drawers an unfinished play on so promising a subject as *Cato*, great pressure was put upon him by his friends to complete it for the stage. Somewhat unwillingly, apparently, he roused himself to the task. So small, indeed, was his inclination for it, that he is said in the first instance to have asked Hughes, afterwards author of the *Siege of Damascus*, to write a fifth act for him. Hughes undertook to do so, but on returning a few days afterwards with his own performance, he found that Addison had himself finished the play. In spite of the judgment of the critics, *Cato* was quickly hurried off for rehearsal, doubtless with many fears on the part of the author. His anxieties during this period must have been great. "I was this morning," writes Swift to Stella on the 6th of April, "at ten at the rehearsal of Mr. Addison's play, called *Cato*, which is to

be acted on Friday. There was not half a score of us to see it. We stood on the stage, and it was foolish enough to see the actors prompted every moment, and the poet directing them, and the drab that acts Cato's daughter (Mrs. Oldfield) out in the midst of a passionate part, and then calling out 'What's next?'"

Mrs. Oldfield not only occasionally forgot the poet's text; she also criticised it. She seems to have objected to the original draft of a speech of Portius in the second scene of the third act; and Pope, whose advice Addison appears to have frequently asked, suggested the present reading:

> "Fixt in astonishment, I gaze upon thee
> Like one just blasted by a stroke from heaven
> Who pants for breath, and *stiffens, yet alive*,
> In dreadful looks: a monument of wrath."[1]

Pope also proposed the alteration of the last line in the play from

> "And oh, 'twas this that ended Cato's life,"

to

> "And robs the guilty world of Cato's life;"

and he was generally the cause of many modifications. "I believe," said he to Spence, "Mr. Addison did not leave a word unchanged that I objected to in his *Cato*."[2]

On the 13th of April the play was ready for performance, and contemporary accounts give a vivid picture of the eagerness of the public, the excitement of parties, and the apprehensions of the author. "On our first night of acting it," says Cibber in his Apology, speaking of the subsequent representation at Oxford, "our house was, in a manner, invested, and entrance demanded by

[1] Spence's *Anecdotes*, p. 151. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

twelve o'clock at noon; and before one it was not wide enough for many who came too late for their places. The same crowds continued for three days together—an uncommon curiosity in that place; and the death of Cato triumphed over the injuries of Cæsar everywhere." The prologue—a very fine one—was contributed by Pope; the epilogue—written, according to the execrable taste fashionable after the Restoration, in a comic vein—by Garth. As to the performance itself, a very lively record of the effect it produced remains in Pope's letter to Trumbull of the 30th April 1713:—

"Cato was not so much the wonder of Rome in his days, as he is of Britain in ours; and though all the foolish industry possible had been used to make it thought a party play, yet what the author said of another may the most properly be applied to him on this occasion:

> 'Envy itself is dumb, in wonder lost,
> And factions strive who shall applaud him most!' [1]

The numerous and violent claps of the Whig party on the one side of the theatre were echoed back by the Tories on the other; while the author sweated behind the scenes with concern to find their applause proceeding more from the hand than the head. This was the case, too, with the Prologue-writer, who was clapped into a staunch Whig at the end of every two lines. I believe you have heard that, after all the applauses of the opposite faction, my Lord Bolingbroke sent for Booth, who played Cato, into the box, between one of the acts, and presented him with fifty guineas, in acknowledgment, as he expressed it, for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. The Whigs are unwilling to be distanced this way, and therefore design a present to the same Cato very speedily; in the meantime they are getting ready as good a sentence as the former on their side; so betwixt

[1] These lines are to be found in *The Campaign*, see p. 66.

them it is probable that Cato (as Dr. Garth expressed it) may have something to live upon after he dies."

The Queen herself partook, or feigned to partake, of the general enthusiasm, and expressed a wish that the play should be dedicated to her. This honour had, however, been already designed by the poet for the Duchess of Marlborough, so that, finding himself unable under the circumstances to fulfil his intentions, he decided to leave the play without any dedication. *Cato* ran for the then unprecedented period of thirty-five nights. Addison appears to have behaved with great liberality to the actors, and, at Oxford, to have handed over to them all the profits of the first night's performance; while they in return, Cibber tells us, thought themselves "obliged to spare no pains in the proper decorations" of the piece.

The fame of *Cato* spread from England to the Continent. It was twice translated into Italian, twice into French, and once into Latin; a French and a German imitation of it were also published. Voltaire, to whom Shakespeare appeared no better than an inspired barbarian, praises it in the highest terms. "*The first English writer who composed a regular tragedy* and infused a spirit of elegance through every part of it was," says he, "the illustrious Mr. Addison. His *Cato* is a masterpiece, both with regard to the diction and the harmony and beauty of the numbers. The character of Cato is, in my opinion, greatly superior to that of Cornelia in the *Pompey* of Corneille, for Cato is great without anything of fustian, and Cornelia, who besides is not a necessary character, tends sometimes to bombast." Even he, however, could not put up with the love-scenes.

"Addison l'a déjà tenté;
C'étoit le poëte des sâges,
Mais il étoit trop concerté,
Et dans son Caton si vanté
Les deux filles en vérité,
Sont d'insipides personages.
Imitez du grand Addison
Seulement ce qu'il a de bon."

There were, of course, not wanting voices of detraction. A graduate of Oxford attacked *Cato* in a pamphlet entitled *Mr. Addison turned Tory*, in which the party spirit of the play was censured. Dr. Sewell, a well-known physician of the day—afterwards satirised by Pope as "Sanguine Sewell"—undertook Addison's defence, and showed that he owed his success to the poetical, and not to the political merits of his drama. A much more formidable critic appeared in John Dennis, a specimen of whose criticism on *Cato* is preserved in Johnson's *Life*, and who, it must be owned, went a great deal nearer the mark in his judgment than did Voltaire. Dennis had many of the qualities of a good critic. Though his judgment was often overborne by his passion, he generally contrived to fasten on the weak points of the works which he criticised, and he at once detected the undramatic character of *Cato*. His ridicule of the absurdities arising out of Addison's rigid observance of the unity of place is extremely humorous and quite unanswerable. But, as usual, he spoiled his case by the violence and want of discrimination in his censure, which betrayed too plainly the personal feelings of the writer. It is said that Dennis was offended with Addison for not having adequately exhibited his talents in the *Spectator* when mention was made of his works, and he certainly did complain in a published

letter that Addison had chosen to quote a couplet from his translation of Boileau in preference to another from a poem on the battle of Ramilies, which he himself thought better of. But the fact seems to have been overlooked that Dennis had other grounds for resentment. In the 40th number of the *Spectator* the writer speaks of "a ridiculous doctrine of modern criticism, that they (tragic writers) are obliged to an equal distribution of rewards and punishments, and an impartial execution of poetical justice." This was a plain stroke at Dennis, who was a well-known advocate of the doctrine; and a considerable portion of the critic's gall was therefore expended on Addison's violation of the supposed rule in *Cato*.

Looking at *Cato* from Voltaire's point of view—which was Addison's own—and having regard to the spirit of elegance infused through every part of it, there is much to admire in the play. It is full of pointed sentences, such as—

> "'Tis not in mortals to command success,
> But we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it."

It has also many fine descriptive passages, the best of which, perhaps, occurs in the dialogue between Syphax and Juba respecting civilised and barbarian virtues:

> "Believe me, prince, there's not an African
> That traverses our vast Numidian deserts
> In quest of prey, and lives upon his bow,
> But better practises these boasted virtues.
> Coarse are his meals, the fortune of the chase,
> Amidst the running streams he slakes his thirst,
> Toils all the day, and at th' approach of night
> On the first friendly bank he throws him down,
> Or rests his head upon a rock till morn:

Then rises fresh, pursues his wonted game,
And if the following day he chance to find
A new repast, or an untasted spring,
Blesses his stars, and thinks it luxury."

But in all those parts of the poem where action and not ornament is demanded, we seem to perceive the work of a poet who was constantly thinking of what his characters ought to say in the situation, rather than of one who was actually living with them in the situation itself. Take Sempronius' speech to Syphax describing the horrors of the conspirator's position:

"Remember, Syphax, we must work in haste:
O think what anxious moments pass between
The birth of plots and their last fatal period.
Oh! 'tis a dreadful interval of time,
Filled up with horror all, and big with death!
Destruction hangs on every word we speak,
On every thought, till the concluding stroke
Determines all, and closes our design."

Compare with this the language of real tragedy, the soliloquy of Brutus in *Julius Cæsar*, on which Addison apparently meant to improve:

"Since Cassius first did whet me against Cæsar
I have not slept.
Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:
The genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council; and the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection."

These two passages are good examples of the French and English ideals of dramatic diction, though the lines from *Cato* are more figurative than is usual in that play.

Addison deliberately aimed at this French manner. "I must observe," says he, "that when our thoughts are great and just they are often obscured by the sounding phrases, hard metaphors, and forced expressions in which they are clothed. Shakespeare is often very faulty in this particular."[1] Certainly he is; but who does not see that, in spite of his metaphoric style, the speech of Brutus just quoted is far simpler and more natural than the elegant "correctness" of Sempronius.

[1] *Spectator*, No. 39.

CHAPTER VII

ADDISON'S QUARREL WITH POPE.

It has been said that with *Cato* the good fortune of Addison reached its climax. After his triumph in the theatre, though he filled great offices in the State and wedded "a noble wife," his political success was marred by disagreements with one of his oldest friends; while with the Countess of Warwick, if we are to believe Pope, he "married discord." Added to which he was unlucky enough to incur the enmity of the most poignant and vindictive of satiric poets, and a certain shadow has been for ever thrown over his character by the famous verses on "Atticus." It will be convenient in this chapter to investigate, as far as is possible, the truth as to the quarrel between Pope and Addison. The latter has hitherto been at a certain disadvantage with the public, since the facts of the case were entirely furnished by Pope, and, though his account was dissected with great acuteness by Blackstone in the *Biographia Britannica*, the partizans of the poet were still able to plead that his uncontradicted statements could not be disposed of by mere considerations of probability.

Pope's account of his final rupture with Addison is reported by Spence as follows:—"Philips seems to have

been encouraged to abuse me in coffee-houses and conversations: Gildon wrote a thing about Wycherley in which he had abused both me and my relations very grossly. Lord Warwick himself told me one day 'that it was in vain for me to endeavour to be well with Mr. Addison; that his jealous temper would never admit of a settled friendship between us; and, to convince me of what he had said, assured me that Addison had encouraged Gildon to publish those scandals, and had given him ten guineas after they were published.' The next day, while I was heated with what I had heard, I wrote a letter to Mr. Addison to let him know 'that I was not unacquainted with this behaviour of his; that, if I was to speak severely of him in return for it, it should not be in such a dirty way; that I would rather tell him himself fairly of his faults and allow his good qualities; and that it should be something in the following manner.' I then subjoined the first sketch of what has since been called my satire on Addison. He used me very civilly ever after; and never did me any injustice, that I know of, from that time to his death, which was about three years after."[1]

Such was the story told by Pope in his own defence against the charge that he had written and circulated the lines on Addison after the latter's death. In confirmation of his evidence, and in proof of his own good feeling for, and open dealing with Addison, he inserted in the so-called authorised edition of his correspondence in 1737 several letters written apparently to Addison, while in what he pretended to be the surreptitious edition of 1735 appeared a letter to Craggs, written in July 1715, which, as it contained many of the phrases and expressions used

[1] Spence's *Anecdotes*, pp. 148-149.

in the character of Atticus, created an impression in the mind of the public that both letter and verses were written about the same time. No suspicion as to the genuineness of this correspondence was raised till the discovery of the Caryll letters, which first revealed the fact that most of the pretended letters to Addison had been really addressed to Caryll; that there had been, in fact, no correspondence between Pope and Addison; and that therefore, in all probability, the letter to Craggs was also a fictitious composition, inserted in the so-called surreptitious volume of 1735 to establish the credit of Pope's own story.

We must accordingly put aside as undeserving of credence the poet's ingeniously constructed charge, at any rate in the particular shape in which it is preferred, and must endeavour to form for ourselves such a judgment as is rendered probable by the acknowledged facts of the case. What is indisputable is that in 1715 a rupture took place between Addison and Pope in consequence of the injury which the translator of the *Iliad* conceived himself to have suffered from the countenance given to Tickell's rival performance; and that in 1723 we find the first mention of the satire upon Addison in a letter from Atterbury to Pope. The question is, what blame attaches to Addison for his conduct in the matter of the two translations; and what is the amount of truth in Pope's story respecting the composition of the verses on Atticus.

Pope made Addison's acquaintance in the year 1712. On the 20th of December 1711 Addison had noticed Pope's *Art of Criticism* in the 253d number of the *Spectator*, partly, no doubt, in consequence of his perception of the merits of the poem, but probably at the particular instiga-

tion of Steele, whose acquaintance with Pope may have been due to the common friendship of both with Caryll. The praise bestowed on the *Essay* (as it was afterwards called) was of the finest and most liberal kind, and was the more welcome because it was preceded by a censure conveyed with admirable delicacy on "the strokes of ill-nature" which the poem contained. Pope was naturally exceedingly pleased, and wrote to Steele a letter of thanks under the impression that the latter was the writer of the paper, a misapprehension which Steele at once hastened to correct. "The paper," says he, "was written by one with whom I will make you acquainted, which is the best return I can make to you for your favour."

These words were doubtless used by Steele in the warmth of his affection for Addison, but they also express the general estimation in which the latter was then held. He had recently established his man Button in a coffee-house in Covent Garden, where, surrounded by his little senate, Budgell, Tickell, Carey, and Philips, he ruled supreme over the world of taste and letters. Something, no doubt, of the spirit of the coterie pervaded the select assembly. Addison could always find a word of condescending praise for his followers in the pages of the *Spectator;* he corrected their plays and mended their prologues; and they on their side paid back their patron with unbounded reverence, perhaps justifying the satirical allusion of the poet to the "applause" so grateful to the ear of Atticus:

> "While wits and Templars every sentence raise,
> And wonder with a foolish face of praise."

Pope, according to his own account, was admitted to the society and left it, as he said, because he found it sit

too far into the night for his health. It may, however, be suspected that the natures of the author of the *Dunciad* and of the creator of Sir Roger de Coverley, though touching each other at many points, were far from naturally congenial; that the essayist was well aware that the man who could write the *Essay on Criticism* had a higher capacity for poetry than either himself or any of his followers; and that the poet, on his side, conscious of great if undeveloped powers, was inclined to resent the air of patronage with which he was treated by the King of Button's. Certain it is that the praise of Pope by Addison in number 253 of the *Spectator* is qualified (though by no means unjustly), and that he is not spoken of with the same warmth as Tickell and Ambrose Philips in number 523. "Addison," said Pope to Spence, "seemed to value himself more upon his poetry than upon his prose; though he wrote the latter with such particular ease, fluency, and happiness."[1] This often happens; and perhaps the uneasy consciousness that, in spite of the reputation which his *Campaign* had secured for him, he was really inferior to such men as John Philips and Tickell, made Addison touchy at the idea of the entire circle being outshone by a new candidate for poetical fame.

Whatever jealousy, however, existed between the two was carefully suppressed during the first year of their acquaintance. Pope showed Addison the first draft of the *Rape of the Lock*, and, according to Warburton (whose account must be received with suspicion), imparted to him his design of adding the fairy machinery. If Addison really endeavoured to dissuade the

[1] Spence's *Anecdotes*, p. 257.

poet from making this exquisite addition, the latter was on his side anxious that *Cato*, which, as has been said, was shown to him after its completion, should not be presented on the stage; and his advice, if tested by the result, would have been quite as open as Addison's to an unfavourable construction. He wrote, however, for the play the famous Prologue, which Steele inserted with many compliments in the *Guardian*. But not long afterwards the effect of the compliments was spoiled by the comparatively cold mention of Pope's *Pastorals* in the same paper that contained a glowing panegyric on the *Pastorals* of Ambrose Philips. In revenge Pope wrote his paper commending Philips' performance and depreciating his own, the irony of which, it is said, escaping the notice of Steele, was inserted by him in the *Guardian*, much to the amusement of Addison and more to the disgust of Philips.

The occasion on which Pope's pique against Addison began to develop into bitter resentment is sufficiently indicated by the date which the poet assigns to the first letter in the concocted correspondence—viz. July 20, 1713. This letter (which is taken, with a few slight alterations of names, from one written to Caryll on November 19, 1712) opens as follows:—

"I am more joyed at your return than I should be at that of the sun, so much as I wish for him this melancholy wet season; but it has a fate too like yours to be displeasing to owls and obscure animals, who cannot bear his lustre. What puts me in mind of these night-birds was John Dennis, whom I think you are best revenged upon, as the sun was in the fable upon those bats and beastly birds above mentioned, only by shining on. I am so far from esteeming it any misfortune, that I congratulate you upon having your

share in that which all the great men and all the good men that ever lived have had their part of—envy and calumny. To be uncensured and to be obscure is the same thing. You may conclude from what I here say that it was never in my thoughts to have offered you my pen in any direct reply to such a critic, but only in some little raillery, not in defence of you, but in contempt of him."

The allusion is to the squib called *Dr. Norris' Narrative of the Frenzy of John Dennis*, which, it appears, was shown to Addison by Pope before its appearance, and after the publication of which Addison caused Steele to write to Lintot in the following terms:—

"Mr. Lintot,—Mr. Addison desired me to tell you that he wholly disapproves the manner of treating Mr. Dennis in a little pamphlet by way of Mr. Norris' account. When he thinks fit to take notice of Mr. Dennis' objections to his writings, he will do it in a way Mr. Dennis shall have no just reason to complain of. But when the papers above mentioned were offered to be communicated to him he said he could not, either in honour or conscience, be privy to such a treatment, and was sorry to hear of it.—I am, sir, your very humble servant."

Pope's motive in writing the pamphlet was, as Johnson says, "to give his resentment full play without appearing to revenge himself" for the attack which Dennis had made on his own poems. Addison doubtless divined the truth; but the wording of the letter which he caused a third person to write to Lintot certainly seems studiously offensive to Pope, who had, professedly at any rate, placed his pen at his service, and who had connected his own name with *Cato* by the fine Prologue he had written in its praise. Lintot would of course have shown Pope Steele's letter, and we may be sure that the lofty tone taken by Addison in speaking of the

pamphlet would have rankled bitterly in the poet's mind.

At the same time Philips, who was naturally enraged with Pope on account of the ridicule with which the latter had covered his *Pastorals*, endeavoured to widen the breach by spreading a report that Pope had entered into a conspiracy to write against the Whigs and to undermine the reputation of Addison. Addison seems to have lent a ready ear to these accusations. At any rate Pope thought so; for when the good-natured painter Jervas sought to bring about a composition, he wrote to him (27th August 1714):

"What you mentioned of the friendly office you endeavoured to do betwixt Mr. Addison and me deserves acknowledgment on my part. You thoroughly know my regard to his character, and my propensity to testify it by all ways in my power. You as thoroughly know the scandalous meanness of that proceeding, which was used by Philips, to make a man I so highly value suspect my disposition towards him. But as, after all, Mr. Addison must be the judge in what regards himself, and has seemed to be no very just one to me, so I must own to you I expect nothing but civility from him, how much soever I wish for his friendship. As for any offices of real kindness or service which it is in his power to do me, I should be ashamed to receive them from any man who had no better opinion of my morals than to think me a party man, nor of my temper than to believe me capable of maligning or envying another's reputation as a poet. So I leave it to time to convince him as to both, to show him the shallow depths of those half-witted creatures who misinformed him, and to prove that I am incapable of endeavouring to lessen a person whom I would be proud to imitate and therefore ashamed to flatter. In a word, Mr. Addison is sure of my respect at all times, and of my real friendship whenever he shall think fit to know me for what I am."

It is evident from the tone of this letter that all the materials for a violent quarrel were in existence. On the one side was Addison with probably an instinctive dislike of Pope's character, intensified by the injurious reports circulated against Pope in the "little senate" at Button's; with a nature somewhat cold and reserved; and with something of literary jealousy partly arising from a sense of what was due to his acknowledged supremacy, and partly from a perception that there had appeared a very formidable "brother near the throne." On the side of Pope there was an eager sensitiveness, ever craving for recognition and praise, with an abnormal irritability prone to watch for, and reluctant to forgive, anything in the shape of a slight or an injury. Slights and injuries he already deemed himself to have received, and accordingly, when Tickell in 1715 published his translation of the first book of the *Iliad* at the same time with his own translation of the first four books, his smothered resentment broke into a blaze at what he imagined to be a conspiracy to damage his poetical reputation. Many years afterwards, when the quarrel between Addison and himself had become notorious, he arranged his version of it for the public in a manner which is indeed far from assisting us to a knowledge of the truth, but which enables us to understand very clearly what was passing in his own mind at the time.

The subscription for Pope's translation of the *Iliad* was set on foot in November 1713. On the 10th October 1714, having two books completed, he wished to submit them—or at any rate he told the public so in 1735—to Addison's judgment. This was at a date when, as he informed Spence, "there had been a coldness between

Mr. Addison and me" for some time. According to the letter which appears in his published correspondence, he wrote to Addison on the subject as follows:—

"I have been acquainted by one of my friends, who omits no opportunities of gratifying me, that you have lately been pleased to speak of me in a manner which nothing but the real respect I have for you can deserve. May I hope that some late malevolences have lost their effect? . . . As to what you have said of me I shall never believe that the author of *Cato* can speak one thing and think another. As a proof that I account you sincere, I beg a favour of you,—it is that you would look over the two first books of my translation of Homer, which are in the hands of Lord Halifax. I am sensible how much the reputation of any poetical work will depend upon the character you give it. It is therefore some evidence of the trust I repose in your good will when I give you this opportunity of speaking ill of me with justice, and yet expect you will tell me your truest thoughts at the same time you tell others your most favourable ones."[1]

Whether the facts reported in this letter were as fictitious as we have a right to assume the letter itself to be, it is impossible to say; Pope at any rate told Spence the following story, which is clearly meant to fall in with the evidence of the correspondence:—

"On his meeting me there" (Button's Coffee House) "he took me aside and said he should be glad to dine with me at such a tavern if I would stay till those people (Budgell and Philips) were gone. We went accordingly, and after dinner Mr. Addison said 'that he had wanted for some time to talk with me: that his friend Tickell had formerly, while at Oxford, translated the first book of the *Iliad*. That he now designed to print it; and had desired him to look it over: he must therefore beg that I would not desire him to look over my first book, because, if he did, it would have the air

[1] Pope's *Works*, Elwin and Courthope's edition, vol. vi. p. 408.

of double dealing.' I assured him that I did not take it ill of Mr. Tickell that he was going to publish his translation; that he certainly had as much right to translate any author as myself; and that publishing both was entering on a fair stage. I then added 'that I would not desire him to look over my first book of the *Iliad* because he had looked over Mr. Tickell's; but could wish to have the benefit of his observations on my second, which I had then finished, and which Mr. Tickell had not touched upon.' Accordingly I sent him the second book the next morning; and in a few days he returned it with very high commendation. Soon after it was generally known that Mr. Tickell was publishing the first book of the *Iliad* I met Dr. Young in the street, and upon our falling into that subject, the doctor expressed a great deal of surprise at Tickell's having such a translation by him so long. He said that it was inconceivable to him; and that there must be some mistake in the matter: that he and Tickell were so intimately acquainted at Oxford that each used to communicate to the other whatever verses they wrote, even to the least things: that Tickell could not have been busied in so long a work there without his knowing something of the matter; and that he had never heard a single word of it till this occasion."[1]

It is scarcely necessary to say that, after the light that has been thrown on Pope's character by the detection of the frauds he practised in the publication of his correspondence, it is impossible to give any credence to the tales he poured into Spence's ear tending to blacken Addison's character and to exalt his own. Tickell's MS. of the translation is in existence, and all the evidence tends to show that he was really the author of it. But the above statement may be taken to reflect accurately enough the rage, the resentment, and the suspicion which disturbed Pope's own mind on the appearance of the rival translation. We can scarcely

[1] Spence's *Anecdotes*, p. 146.

doubt that it was this, and this alone, which roused him to such glowing indignation, and inspired him to write the character of Atticus. When the verses were made public, after Addison's death, he probably perceived that the public would not consider the evidence for Addison's collusion with Tickell to be sufficiently strong to afford a justification for the bitterness of the satire. It was necessary to advance some stronger plea for such retaliation, especially as rumour confidently asserted that the lines had not been written till after Addison was dead. Hence the story told by Pope to Spence, proving first that the lines were not only written during Addison's lifetime, but were actually sent to Addison himself; and secondly, that they were only composed after the strongest evidence had been afforded to the poet of his rival's malignant disposition towards him. Hence, too, the publication in 1735 of the letter to Craggs, which, containing as it did many of the phrases and metaphors employed in the verses, seemed to supply indirect evidence that both were written about the same period.

With regard to Pope's story it is not too much to say that it entirely breaks down on examination. He professes to give it on the authority of Lord Warwick himself, reckoning, of course, that the evidence of Addison's own stepson would be conclusive with the public. But Addison was not married to the Countess of Warwick till August 1716; and in the previous May he had bestowed the most liberal praise on Pope's translation in one of his papers in the *Freeholder*. For Lord Warwick therefore to argue at that date that Addison's "*jealous temper* could never admit of a settled friend-

ship" between him and Pope was out of the question. If, on the other hand, Lord Warwick told his story to Pope before his mother's marriage, the difficulty is equally great. The letter to Craggs, which, if it was ever sent to the latter at all, must obviously have been written in the same "heat" which prompted the satire on Atticus, is dated July 15, 1715. This fits in well enough with the date of the dispute about the rival translations of the *Iliad*, but not with Lord Warwick's story, for Wycherley, after whose death Gildon, we are told, was hired by Addison to abuse Pope, did not die till the December of that year.

Again, the internal evidence of the character itself points to the fact that, when it was first composed, its "heat" was not caused by any information the poet had received of a transaction between Addison and Gildon. The following is the first published version of the satire:—

"If Dennis writes and rails in furious pet
I'll answer Dennis when I am in debt.
If meagre Gildon draw his meaner quill,
I wish the man a dinner and sit still.
But should there *One* whose better stars conspire
To form a bard, and raise a genius higher,
Blest with each talent and each art to please,
And born to live, converse, and write with ease;
Should such a one, resolved to reign alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne.
View him with jealous yet with scornful eyes,
Hate him for arts that caused himself to rise,
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering teach the rest to sneer.
Alike reserved to blame or to commend,
A timorous foe and a suspicious friend,

Fearing e'en fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obliging that he ne'er obliged;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
Just hit the fault, and hesitate dislike,
Who when two wits on rival themes contest,
Approves of both, but likes the worst the best:
Like Cato, give his little senate laws
And sits attentive to his own applause;
While wits and templars every sentence praise
And wonder with a foolish face of praise:
Who would not laugh if such a man there be?
Who would not weep if Addison were he?"

There is sufficient corroborative evidence to allow us to believe that these lines were actually written, as Pope says, during Addison's lifetime; and if they were, the character of the satire would naturally suggest that its motive was Addison's supposed conduct in the matter of the two translations of the *Iliad*. There is nothing in them to indicate any connection in the poet's mind between Gildon and Addison; on the other hand, the allusion to the "two wits" shows the special grievance that formed the basis, in his imagination, of the whole character. Afterwards we find that "meaner quill" is replaced by "*venal* quill;" and the couplet about the rival translations is suppressed. The inference is plain. When Pope was charged with having written the character after Addison's death, he found himself obliged, in self-defence, to furnish a moral justification for the satire; and, after his own unfortunate manner, he proceeded to build up for himself a position on a number of systematic falsehoods. His story was probably so far true that the character was really written while Addison was alive; on the other hand, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the entire

statement about Gildon and Lord Warwick is fabulous; and, as the assertion that the lines were sent to Addison immediately after their composition is associated with these myths, this too may fairly be dismissed as equally undeserving of belief.

As to the truth of the character of Atticus, however, it by no means follows, because Pope's account of its origin is false, that the portrait itself is altogether untrue. The partizans of Addison endeavour to prove that it is throughout malicious and unjust. But no one can fail to perceive that the character itself is a very extraordinary picture of human nature; and there is no reason to suppose that Addison was superior to the weaknesses of his kind. On the contrary, there is independent evidence to show that he was strongly influenced by that literary jealousy which makes the groundwork of the ideal character. This the piercing intelligence of Pope no doubt plainly discerned; his inflamed imagination built up on this foundation the wonderful fabric that has ever since continued to enchant the world. The reader who is acquainted with his own heart will probably not find much difficulty in determining what elements in the character are derived from the substantial truth of nature, and what are to be ascribed to the exaggerated perceptions of Genius.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST YEARS OF HIS LIFE.

THE representation of *Cato* on the stage was a turning point in the political fortunes of the Whigs. In the same month the Queen announced, on the meeting of Parliament, the signature of the Treaty of Utrecht. Whatever were the merits or demerits of the policy embodied in this instrument, it offered many points of attack to a compact and vigorous Opposition. The most salient of these was perhaps the alleged sacrifice of British commercial interests through the incompetence or corruption of the negotiators, and on this question the Whigs accordingly raised vehement and reiterated debates. Addison aided his political friends with an ingenious pamphlet on the subject called *The late Trial and Conviction of Count Tariff*, containing a narrative of the lawsuit between the Count and Goodman Fact, which is written with much spirit and pleasantry. It is said that he also took the field in answer to the Address to the Queen from the magistrates of Dunkirk, wherein Her Majesty was requested to waive the execution of the article in the Treaty providing for the demolition of the harbour and fortifications of that town; but if he wrote on the subject the pamphlet has

not been preserved by Tickell. His old friend Steele was meanwhile involving himself in difficulties through the heat and impetuosity of his party passions. After the painful abstinence from partizanship imposed on him by the scheme of the *Tatler* and *Spectator* he had founded the *Guardian* on similar lines, and had carried it on in a non-political spirit up to the 128th number, when his Whig feelings could restrain themselves no longer, and he inserted a letter signed by "An English Tory," demanding the immediate demolition of Dunkirk. Soon afterwards he published a pamphlet called *The Crisis* to excite the apprehensions of the nation with regard to the Protestant succession, and, dropping the *Guardian*, started the *Englishman*, a political paper of extreme Whig views. He further irritated the Tory majority in Parliament by supporting the proposal of Sir Thomas Hanmer, as Speaker of the House of Commons, in a speech violently reflecting on the rejected Bill for a Treaty of Commerce with France. A complaint was brought before the House against the *Crisis* and two numbers of the *Englishman*, and Steel was ordered to attend and answer for his conduct. After the charge had been preferred against him, he asked for time to arrange his defence; and this being granted him after a warm debate, he reappeared in his place a few days later, and made a long and able speech, which is said to have been prepared for him by Addison, acting under the instructions of the Kit-Kat Club. It did not, however, save him from being expelled from the House.

Addison himself stood aloof, as far as was possible, from the heated atmosphere of party, occupying his

time chiefly with the execution of literary designs. In 1713 he began a work on the Evidences of Christianity, which he never finished, and in the last half of the year 1714 he completed the eighth volume of the *Spectator*. So moderate was his political attitude that Bolingbroke was not without hopes of bringing him over to the Tory side; an interview, however, convinced him that it was useless to dream of converting Addison's steady constitutional principle to his own ambitious schemes.

The condition of the Tory party was indeed rapidly becoming desperate. Its leaders were at open variance with each other. Oxford, a veteran intriguer, was desirous of combining with the Whigs; the more daring and brilliant Bolingbroke aimed at the restoration of the exiled Stuarts. His influence, joined to natural family affection, prevailed with the Queen, who was persuaded to deprive Oxford of the Treasurer's staff. But her health was undermined, and a furious and indecent dispute between the two Tory leaders in her own presence completely prostrated her. She was carried from the Council, and sinking into a state of unconsciousness from which she never recovered, died on the 1st of August 1714.

Meantime the Whigs were united and prepared. On the meeting of the Council George I. was proclaimed King without opposition: Lord-Justices were authorised to administer affairs provisionally; and Addison was appointed their Secretary. It is said, though on no good authority, that having, in discharge of his office, to announce to George I. the death of the Queen, Addison was embarrassed in his choice of phrases for the occasion, and that the duty to which the best writer in the *Spectator* proved unequal was performed by

common clerk. Had Addison been quite unfamiliar with public life this story would have been more credible, but his experience in Ireland must have made him acquainted with the peculiarities of official English; and some surviving specimens of his public correspondence prove him to have been a sufficient master in the art of saying nothing in a magnificent way.

On the arrival of the King in England, the Earl of Sunderland was appointed to succeed the Duke of Shrewsbury as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and he once more offered Addison the post of Chief Secretary. In that office the latter continued till the Earl's resignation of the Lord-Lieutenancy in August 1715. It would appear to have been less lucrative to him than when he previously held it, and, indeed, than he himself had expected; the cause of this deficiency being, as he states, "his Lordship's absence from that kingdom, and his not being qualified to give out military commissions."[1] He is said, nevertheless, to have shown the strictest probity and honour in his official dealings, and some of his extant correspondence (the authenticity of which, however, is guaranteed only by the unsatisfactory testimony of Curll) shows him to have declined, in a very high-minded manner, a present of money, evidently intended to secure his interest on behalf of an applicant. He seems to have been in London almost as much as in Dublin during his tenure of office, and he found time in the midst of his public business to compose another play for the stage.

For there appears to be no good reason for doubting that *The Drummer* was the work of Addison. It is true

1 Addison's Memorial to the King.

that it was not included by Tickell in his edition of his friend's writings; and Steele, in the letter to Congreve which he prefixed to the second edition of the play, only says that Addison sent for him when he was a patentee of Drury Lane Theatre, and told him "that a gentleman then in the room had written a play which he was sure I should like, but it was to be a secret; and he knew I would take as much pains, since he recommended it, as I would for him." But Steele could, under such circumstances, hardly have been deceived as to the real authorship of the play, and if confirmatory evidence is required, it is furnished by Theobald, who tells us that Addison informed him that he had taken the character of Vellum, the steward, from Fletcher's *Scornful Lady*. Addison was probably not anxious himself to assert his right of paternity to the play. It was acted at Drury Lane, and, the name of the author being unknown, was coldly received; a second performance of it after Addison's death, when the authorship was proclaimed, was naturally more successful; but, in fact, the piece is, like *Cato*, a standing proof of Addison's deficiency in dramatic genius. The plot is poor and trivial, nor does the dialogue, though it shows in many passages traces of its author's peculiar vein of humour, make amends by its brilliancy for the tameness of the dramatic situation.

He was soon, however, called upon to employ his pen on a task better suited to his powers. In September 1715 there was a rising in Scotland and in the North of England on behalf of the Pretender. The rebellion was put down with little difficulty; but the position of the House of Brunswick was far more precarious than on

the surface it seemed to be. It could count, no doubt, on the loyalty of a House of Commons, elected when the Tories were momentarily stunned by the death of Queen Anne, on the faith of the army, and on the support of the monied interest. On the other hand, the two most important classes in the kingdom—the landed proprietors and the clergy—were generally hostile to the new *régime*, and the influence exercised by the latter was of course exceedingly great in days when the pulpit was still the chief instrument in the formation of public opinion. The weight of some powerful writer was urgently needed on the Whig side, and Addison—who in the preceding August had been obliged to vacate his office of Secretary in consequence of the resignation of the Lord-Lieutenant—was by common consent indicated as the man best qualified for the task. There were indeed hot political partizans who questioned his capacity. Steele said that "the Government had made choice of a lute when they ought to have taken a trumpet." But if by the "trumpet" he was modestly alluding to himself, it may very well be doubted if the objects of the Government would have been attained by employing the services of the author of the *Englishman*. What was wanted was not party invective, but the calm persuasiveness of reason; a pen that could *prove* to all Tory country gentlemen and thorough-going High Churchmen that the Protestant succession was indispensable to the safety of the principles which each respectively considered to be of vital importance. This was the task which lay before Addison, and which he accomplished with consummate skill in the *Freeholder*.

The name of the new paper was selected by him in

order to suggest that property was the basis of liberty; and his main argument, which he introduces under constantly varying forms, is that there could be no safety for property under a line of monarchs who claimed the dispensing power, and no security for the liberties of the Church under kings of an alien religion. In order to secure variety of treatment, the exact social position of the *Freeholder* is not defined.

"At the same time that I declare I am a freeholder I do not exclude myself from any other title. A freeholder may be either a voter or a knight of the shire, a wit or a fox-hunter, a scholar or a soldier, an alderman or a courtier, a patriot or a stock-jobber. But I choose to be distinguished by this denomination, as the freeholder is the basis of all other titles. Dignities may be grafted upon it; but this is the substantial stock that conveys to them their life, taste, and beauty, and without which they are blossoms that would fall away with every shake of wind."[1]

By this means he was able to impart liveliness to his theme, which he diversifies by philosophical disquisition; by good-natured satire on the prejudices of the country gentlemen; by frequent papers on his favourite subject, "the fair sex;" and by occasional glances at literature. Though his avowed object was to prove the superiority of the Whig over the Tory theory of the Constitution, his "native moderation" never deserts him, and he often lets his disgust at the stupidity of faction and his preference for social over political writing appear in the midst of his argument. The best papers in the series are undoubtedly the "Memoirs of a Preston Rebel" and the "Tory Fox-hunter," both of which are full of the exquisite humour that distinguishes the sketches of Sir

[1] *Freeholder*, No. 1.

Roger de Coverley. The *Freeholder* was only continued for six months (December 23, 1715 to June 9, 1716), being published every Friday and Monday, and being completed in fifty-five numbers. In the last number the essayist described the nature of his work, and gave his reasons for discontinuing it.

"It would not be difficult to continue a paper of this kind if one were disposed to resume the same subjects and weary out the reader with the same thoughts in a different phrase, or to ramble through the cause of Whig and Tory without any certain aim or method in every particular discourse. Such a practice, in political writers, is like that of some preachers taken notice of by Dr. South, who, being prepared only upon two or three points of doctrine, run the same round with their audience from one end of the year to the other, and are always forced to tell them, by way of preface, 'These are particulars of so great importance that they cannot be sufficiently inculcated.' To avoid this method of tautology, I have endeavoured to make every paper a distinct essay upon some particular subject, without deviating into points foreign to the tenor of each discourse. They are indeed most of them essays upon Government, but with a view to the present situation of affairs in Great Britain, so that, if they have the good fortune to live longer than works of this nature generally do, future readers may see in them the complexion of the times in which they were written. However, as there is no employment so irksome as that of transcribing out of one's self next to that of transcribing out of others, I shall let drop the work, since there do not occur to me any material points arising from our present situation which I have not already touched upon."

It was probably in reward for his services in publishing the *Freeholder* that he was made one of the Commissioners for Trade and Colonies. Soon after his appointment to this office he married Charlotte, Countess of Warwick, daughter of Sir Thomas Myddleton, of

Chirk Castle, Denbighshire. His attachment to the Countess is said to have begun years before; and this seems not unlikely, for, though the story of his having been tutor to the young Earl is obviously groundless, two charming letters of his to the latter are in existence which show that as early as 1708 he took a strong interest in the family. These letters, which are written entirely on the subject of birds, may of course have been inspired merely by an affection for the boy himself; but it is not unreasonable to suppose that the writer felt a yet stronger interest in the mother, though her indifference, or his natural diffidence, led him to disguise his feelings; perhaps, indeed, the episode of Sir Roger de Coverley's love passage with the cruel widow may be founded on personal experience. We have seen him in 1711 reporting to a friend that the loss of his place had involved that of his mistress. Possibly the same hard-hearted mistress condescended to relent when she saw her former lover once more on the road to high State preferment.

Report says that the marriage was not a happy one. The tradition, however, like so many others about the same person, seems to have been derived from Pope, who, in his *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, congratulates himself—with an evident glance at Addison—on "not marrying discord with a noble wife." An innuendo of this kind, and coming from such a quarter, ought not to be accepted as evidence without some corroboration, and the only corroboration which is forthcoming is a letter of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who writes from Constantinople in 1717 :—"I received the news of Mr. Addison's being declared Secretary of State with the less surprise

in that I know the post was offered to him before. At that time he declined it; and I really believe he would have done well to decline it now. Such a post as that, and such a wife as the Countess, do not seem to be in prudence eligible for a man that is asthmatic, and we may see the day when he will be glad to resign them both." Lady Mary, however, does not hint that Addison was *then* living unhappily with his wife; her expressions seem to be inspired rather by her own sharp wit and a personal dislike of the Countess than by any knowledge of discord in the household. On the other hand, Addison speaks of his wife in a way which is scarcely consistent with what Johnson calls "uncontradicted report." On March 20th, 1718, he writes to Swift:—"Whenever you see England your company will be the most acceptable in the world at Holland House, where you are highly esteemed by Lady Warwick and the young Lord." A henpecked husband would hardly have invited the Dean of St. Patrick's to be the witness of his domestic discomfort. Nor do the terms of his will, dated only a month before his death, indicate that he regarded his wife with feelings other than those of affection and respect: "I do make and ordain my said dear wife executrix of this my last will; and I do appoint her to be guardian of my dear child, Charlotte Addison, until she shall attain her age of one-and-twenty, being well assured that she will take due care of her education, and provide for her in case she live to be married." On the whole, it seems reasonable to put positive evidence of this kind against those vague rumours of domestic unhappiness, which, however unsubstantial, are so easily propagated and so readily believed.

In April 1717 the dissensions between the two sections of the Whig Cabinet, led respectively by Townshend and Sunderland, reached a climax, and Townshend being worsted, Sunderland became Prime Minister. He at once appointed his old subordinate one of the Secretaries of State, and Addison filled the office for eleven months. "It is universally confessed," says Johnson, "that he was unequal to the duties of his place." Here again the "universal confession" dwindles on examination to something very different. As far as his conduct in administration required to be defended in Parliament, his inaptitude for the place was no doubt conspicuous. He had been elected member of Parliament for Lostwithiel in 1708, and when that election was set aside he was chosen for Malmesbury, a seat which he retained for the rest of his life. He made, however, but one effort to address the House, when, being confused with the cheers which greeted him, he was unable to complete his sentence, and, resuming his seat, never again opened his lips.

But in other respects the evidence of his official incapacity seems to proceed solely from his enemies. "Mr. Addison," said Pope to Spence, "could not give out a common order in writing from his endeavouring always to word it too finely. He had too beautiful an imagination to make a man of business."[1] Copies of official letters and despatches written by Addison are, however, in existence, and prove him to have been a sufficient master of a business style, so that, though his lack of ability as a speaker may well have impaired his efficiency as a member of the Government, Johnson has little warrant for saying that "*finding by*

[1] Spence's *Anecdotes*, p. 175.

experience his own inability, he was forced to solicit his dismission with a pension of fifteen hundred pounds a year." As a matter of fact, Addison's own petition to the King and his private correspondence prove with sufficient clearness that his resignation was caused entirely by his failing health; while the congratulatory Latin verses addressed to him by Vincent Bourne on his recovery from one of his seizures of asthma show that his illness was of the most serious nature.

He resigned his post, however, in March 1718 with cheerful alacrity, and appears to have looked forward to an active period of literary work, for we are told that he meditated a tragedy on the death of Socrates, as well as the completion of his book on the Evidences of Christianity. But this was not to be; the exigencies of the Ministry in the following year demanded the services of his pen. A Peerage Bill, introduced by Sunderland, the effect of which was to cause the sovereign to divest himself of his prerogative of creating fresh peers, had been vehemently attacked by Steele in a pamphlet called the *Plebeian*, published March 14, 1719, which Addison undertook to answer in the *Old Whig* (March 19). The *Plebeian* returned to the attack with spirit and with some acrimony in two numbers published March 29th and 30th, and the *Old Whig* made a somewhat contemptuous reply on April 2d. "Every reader," says Johnson, "surely must regret that these two illustrious friends, after so many years passed in confidence and endearment, in unity of interest, conformity of opinion, and fellowship of study, should finally part in acrimonious opposition. Such a controversy was 'Bellum plusquam civile,' as Lucan expresses it. Why could not faction find

other advocates? But among the uncertainties of the human state, we are doomed to number the instability of friendship."

The rupture seems the more painful when we find Steele, in his third and last *Plebeian*, published April 6th, taunting his opponent with his tardiness in taking the field, at the very moment when his former friend and schoolfellow—unknown to him of course—was dying. Asthma, the old enemy that had driven Addison from office, had returned; dropsy supervened, and he died, 17th June 1719, at Holland House, at the early age of forty-seven. We may imagine the grief, contrition, and remorse that must have torn the affectionate heart of Steele when he had found he had been vexing the last hours of one whom, in spite of all their differences, he loved so well. He had always regarded Addison with almost religious reverence, which did not yield even to acts of severity on his friend's part that would have estranged the feelings of men of a disposition less simple and impulsive. Addison had once lent him £1000 to build a house at Hampton Court, instructing his lawyer to recover the amount when due. On Steele's failure to repay the money, his friend ordered the house and furniture to be sold and the balance to be paid to Steele, writing to him at the same time that he had taken the step to arouse him from his lethargy. B. Victor, the actor, a friend of Steele, who is the authority for the story, says that Steele accepted the reproof with "philosophical composure," and that the incident caused no diminution in their friendship. Political differences at last produced a coldness between them, and in 1717 Steele writes to his wife, "I ask no favour of Mr. Secretary Addison." Great

must have been the revulsion of feeling in a man of his nature when he learned that death had now rendered impossible the renewal of the old associations. All the love, admiration, and enthusiasm for Addison, which his heart and memory still preserved, broke out in the letter to Congreve which he prefixed to *The Drummer*.

Of the closing scene of Addison's life we know little except on rumour. A report was current in Johnson's time, and reached the antiquary John Nichols at the close of the last century, that his life was shortened by over-drinking. But as usual the scandal, when traced to its source, seems to originate with Pope, who told Spence that he himself was once one of the circle at Button's, and left it because he found that their prolonged sittings were injuring his health. It is highly probable that Addison's phlegmatic temperament required to be aroused by wine into conversational activity, and that he was able to drink more than most of his companions without being affected by it; but to suppose that he indulged a sensual appetite to excess is contrary alike to all that we know of his character and to the direct evidence of Bishop Berkeley, who, writing of the first performance of *Cato*, says:—"I was present with Mr. Addison and a few more friends in a side box, where we had a table and two or three flasks of Burgundy and champagne, with which the author (who is a very sober man) thought it necessary to support his spirits."

Another story, told on the same questionable authority, represents him as having sent on his death-bed for Gay, and asked his forgiveness for some injury which he said he had done him, but which he did not specify. From the more trustworthy report of Young, we learn that he

asked to see the Earl of Warwick, and said to him, "See in what peace a Christian can die;" words which are supposed to explain the allusion of the lines in Tickell's elegy—

> "He taught us how to live and (oh! too high
> The price of knowledge) taught us how to die."

His body, after lying in state in the Jerusalem Chamber, was buried by night in Westminster Abbey. The service was performed by Atterbury, and the scene is described by Tickell in a fine passage, probably inspired by a still finer one written by his own rival and his friend's satirist.

> "Can I forget the dismal night that gave
> My soul's best part for ever to the grave?
> How silent did his old companions tread,
> By midnight lamps, the mansions of the dead,
> Through breathing statues, then unheeded things,
> Through rows of warriors, and through walks of kings!
> What awe did the slow solemn march inspire,
> The pealing organ, and the pausing choir;
> The duties by the lawn-robed prelate paid,
> And the last words that dust to dust conveyed!
> While speechless o'er the closing grave we bend,
> Accept these tears, thou dear departed friend!
> Oh gone for ever; take this last adieu,
> And sleep in peace next thy loved Montague."[1]

He left by the Countess of Warwick one daughter, who lived in his old house at Bilton, and died unmarried in 1797.

[1] Tickell's *Elegy*—Compare Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*, v. 107.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GENIUS OF ADDISON.

SUCH is Addison's history, which, scanty as it is, goes far towards justifying the glowing panegyric bestowed by Macaulay on "the unsullied statesman, the accomplished scholar, the consummate painter of life and manners, the great satirist who alone knew how to use ridicule without abusing it; who, without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform; and who reconciled wit and virtue after a long and painful separation, during which wit had been led astray by profligacy and virtue by fanaticism." It is wanting, no doubt, in romantic incident and personal interest, but the same may be said of the life of Scott; and what do we know of the personality of Homer and Shakespeare? The real life of these writers is to be found in their work; and there too, though on a different level and in a different shape, are we to look for the character of the creator of Sir Roger de Coverley. But, while it seems possible to divine the personal tastes and feelings of Shakespeare and Scott under a hundred different ideal forms of their own invention, it is not in these that the genius of Addison most characteristically embodies itself. Did his reputation rest on *Rosamond* or *Cato* or *The Campaign*, his name

would be little better known to us than any among that crowd of mediocrities who have been immortalised in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. The work of Addison consisted in building up a public opinion which, in spite of its durable solidity, seems, like the great Gothic cathedrals, to absorb into itself the individuality of the architect. A vigorous effort of thought is required to perceive how strong this individuality must have been. We have to reflect on the ease with which, even in these days when the foundations of all authority are called in question, we form judgments on questions of morals, breeding, and taste, and then to dwell in imagination on the state of conflict in all matters religious, moral, and artistic, which prevailed in the period between the Restoration and the succession of the House of Hanover. To whom do we owe the comparative harmony we enjoy? Undoubtedly to the authors of the *Spectator*, and first among these by universal consent to Addison.

Addison's own disposition seems to have been of that rare and admirable sort which Hamlet praised in Horatio:

> "Thou hast been
> As one in suffering all that suffers nothing:
> A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
> Has ta'en with equal thanks; and blessed are those
> Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled
> That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
> To sound what stop she please."

These lines fittingly describe the patient serenity and dignified independence with which Addison worked his way amid great hardships and difficulties to the highest position in the State; but they have a yet more honourable application to the task he performed of reconcilin[illegible]

the social dissensions of his countrymen. "The blood and judgment well commingled" are visible in the standard of conduct which he held up for Englishmen in his writings, as well as in his use of the weapon of ridicule against all aberrations from good breeding and common sense. Those only will estimate him at his true worth who will give, what Johnson says is his due, "their days and nights" to the study of the *Spectator*. But from the general reader less must be expected; and as the first chapter of this volume has been devoted to a brief view of the disorder of society with which Addison had to deal, it may be fitting in the last to indicate some of the main points in which he is to be regarded as the reconciler of parties, and the founder of public opinion.

I have shown how, after the final subversion by the Civil War of the old-fashioned Catholic and Feudal standards of social life, two opposing ideals of conduct remained harshly confronting each other in the respective moral codes of the Court and the Puritans. The victorious Puritans, averse to all the pleasures of sense, and intolerant of the most harmless of natural instincts, had oppressed the nation with a religious despotism. The nation, groaning under the yoke, brought back its banished monarch, but was soon shocked to find sensual Pleasure exalted into a worship and Impiety into a creed. Though civil war had ceased, the two parties maintained a truceless conflict of opinion: the Puritan proscribing all amusement because it was patronised by the godless malignants; the courtiers holding that no gentleman could be religious or strict in his morals without becoming tainted with the cant of the Roundheads. This harsh antagonism of sentiment is humorously illustrated by the excellent Sir

Roger, who is made to moralise on the stupidity of party violence by recalling an incident of his own boyhood:—

"The worthy knight, being but a stripling, had occasion to inquire which was the way to St. Anne's Lane, upon which the person whom he spoke to, instead of answering his question, called him a young Popish cur, and asked him who made Anne a saint. The boy, being in some confusion, inquired of the next he met which was the way to Anne's Lane; but was called a prick-eared cur for his pains, and instead of being shown the way, was told that she had been a saint before he was born, and would be one after he was hanged. 'Upon this,' says Sir Roger, 'I did not think it fit to repeat the former question, but going into every lane of the neighbourhood, asked what they called the name of that lane.'" [1]

It was Addison's aim to prove to the contending parties what a large extent of ground they might occupy in common. He showed the courtiers in a form of light literature which pleased their imagination, and with a grace and charm of manner that they were well qualified to appreciate, that true religion was not opposed to good breeding. To this class in particular he addressed his papers on Devotion,[2] on Prayer,[3] on Faith,[4] on Temporal and Eternal Happiness.[5] On the other hand, he brought his raillery to bear on the super-solemnity of the trading and professional classes, in whom the spirit of Puritanism was most prevalent. "About an age ago," says he, "it was the fashion in England for every one that would be thought religious to throw as much sanctity as possible into his face, and, in particular, to abstain from all appearances of mirth and pleasantry, which were looked upon as the marks of a carnal mind. The saint was of a sor-

[1] *Spectator*, No. 125. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. iii., Nos. 201, 207.
[3] *Ibid.*, No. 391. [4] *Ibid.*, No. 465. [5] *Ibid.*, No. 575.

rowful countenance, and generally eaten up with spleen and melancholy." [1]

It was doubtless for the benefit of this class that he wrote his three Essays on Cheerfulness,[2] in which the gloom of the Puritan creed is corrected by arguments founded on Natural Religion.

"The cheerfulness of heart," he observes in a charming passage, "which springs up in us from the survey of Nature's works is an admirable preparation for gratitude. The mind has gone a great way towards praise and thanksgiving that is filled with such secret gladness. A grateful reflection on the Supreme Cause who produces it, sanctifies it in the soul, and gives it its proper value. Such an habitual disposition of mind consecrates every field and wood, turns an ordinary walk into a morning or evening sacrifice, and will improve those transient gleams of joy, which naturally brighten up and refresh the soul on such occasions, into an inviolable and perpetual state of bliss and happiness."

The same qualities appear in his dramatic criticisms. The corruption of the stage was to the Puritan, or the Puritanic moralist, not so much the effect as the cause of the corruption of society. To Jeremy Collier and his imitators the theatre in all its manifestations is equally abominable; they see no difference between Shakespeare and Wycherley. Dryden, who bowed before Collier's rebuke with a penitent dignity that does him high honour, yet rallies him with humour on this point:

"Perhaps the Parson stretched a point too far
When with our Theatres he waged a war;
He tells you that this very Moral Age
Received the first infection from the Stage;

[1] *Spectator*, No. 494. [2] *Ibid.*, Nos. 381, 387, 393.

> But sure a banisht Court with Lewdness fraught
> The seeds of open Vice returning brought;
> Thus lodged (as vice by great example thrives)
> It first debauched the daughters and the wives."

Dryden was quite right. The Court after the Restoration was for the moment the sole school of manners; and the dramatists only reflected on the stage the inverted ideas which were accepted in society as the standard of good breeding. All sentiments founded on reverence for religion, or the family, or honourable industry, were banished from the drama because they were unacceptable at Court. The idea of virtue in a married woman would have seemed prodigious to Shadwell or Wycherley; Vanbrugh had no scruples in presenting to an audience a drunken parson in Sir John Brute; the merchant or tradesman seemed, like Congreve's Alderman Fondlewife, to exist solely that their wives might be seduced by men of fashion. Addison and his disciples saw that these unnatural creations of the theatre were the product of the corruption of society, and that it was men, not institutions, that needed reform. Steele, always the first to feel a generous impulse, took the lead in raising the tone of stage morality in a paper which, characteristically enough, was suggested by some reflections on a passage in one of his own plays.[1] He followed up his attack by an admirable criticism, part of which has been already quoted, on Etherege's *Man in the Mode*, the hero of which, Sir Fopling Flutter, who had long been the model of young men of wit and fashion, he shows to be "a direct knave in his designs and a clown in his language."[2]

As usual, Addison improves the opportunity which

[1] *Spectator*, No. 51. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 65.

Steele affords him, and with his grave irony exposes the ridiculous principle of the fashionable comedy by a simple statement of fact.

"Cuckoldom," says he, "is the basis of most of our modern plays. If an alderman appears upon the stage you may be sure it is in order to be cuckolded. An husband that is a little grave or elderly generally meets with the same fate. Knights and baronets, country squires, and justices of the quorum, come up to town for no other purpose. I have seen poor Dogget cuckolded in all these capacities. In short, our English writers are as frequently severe upon this innocent unhappy creature, commonly known by the name of a cuckold, as the ancient comic writers were upon an eating parasite or a vain-glorious soldier.

". . . I have sometimes thought of compiling a system of ethics out of the writings of these corrupt poets under the title of Stage Morality. But I have been diverted from this thought by a project which has been executed by an ingenious gentleman of my acquaintance. He has composed, it seems, the history of a young fellow who has taken all his notions of the world from the stage, and who has directed himself in every circumstance of his life and conversation by the maxims and examples of the fine gentleman in English comedies. If I can prevail upon him to give me a copy of this new-fashioned novel, I will bestow on it a place in my works, and question not but it may have as good an effect upon the drama as Don Quixote had upon romance."[1]

Nothing could be more skilful than this. Collier's invective no doubt produced a momentary flutter among the dramatists, who, however, soon found they had little to fear from arguments which appealed only to that serious portion of society which did not frequent the theatre. But Addison's penetrating wit, founded as it was on truth and reason, was appreciated by the fashionable world. Dorimant and Sir Fopling Flutter felt

[1] *Spectator*, No. 446.

ashamed of themselves. The cuckold disappeared from the stage. In society itself marriage no longer appeared ridiculous.

"It is my custom," says the *Spectator* in one of his late papers, "to take frequent opportunities of inquiring from time to time what success my speculations meet with in the town. I am glad to find, in particular, that my discourses on marriage have been well received. A friend of mine gives me to understand, from Doctor's Commons, that more licenses have been taken out there of late than usual. I am likewise informed of several pretty fellows who have resolved to commence heads of families by the first favourable opportunity. One of them writes me word that he is ready to enter into the bonds of matrimony provided I will give it him under my hand (as I now do) that a man may show his face in good company after he is married, and that he need not be ashamed to treat a woman with kindness who puts herself into his power for life."[1]

So, too, in politics, it was not to be expected that Addison's moderation should exercise a restraining influence on the violence of Parliamentary parties. But in helping to form a reasonable public opinion in the more reflective part of the nation at large, his efforts could not have been unavailing. He was a steady and consistent supporter of the Whig party, and Bolingbroke found that, in spite of his mildness, his principles were proof against all the seductions of interest. He was, in fact, a Whig in the sense in which all the best political writers in our literature, to whichever party they may have nominally belonged —Bolingbroke, Swift, and Canning as much as Somers and Burke—would have avowed themselves Whigs, a one, that is to say, who desired above all things to maintain the constitution of his country. He attached him

[1] *Spectator*, No. 525 (By Hughes).

self to the Whigs of his period because he saw in them, as the associated defenders of the liberties of the Parliament, the best counterpoise to the still preponderant power of the Crown. But he would have repudiated as vigorously as Burke the democratic principles to which Fox, under the stimulus of party spirit, committed the Whig connection at the outbreak of the French Revolution; and for that stupid and ferocious spirit, generated by party, which would deny to opponents even the appearance of virtue and intelligence, no man had a more wholesome contempt. Page after page of the *Spectator* shows that Addison perceived as clearly as Swift the theoretical absurdity of the party system, and tolerated it only as an evil inseparable from the imperfection of human nature and free institutions. He regarded it as the parent of hypocrisy and self-deception.

"Intemperate zeal, bigotry, and persecution for any party or opinion, how praiseworthy soever they may appear to weak men of our own principles, produce infinite calamities among mankind and are highly criminal in their own nature; and yet how many persons eminent for piety suffer such monstrous and absurd principles of action to take root in their minds under the colour of virtues! For my own part I must own I never yet knew any party so just and reasonable that a man could follow it in its height and violence and at the same time be innocent."[1]

As to party-writing, he considered it identical with lying.

"A man," says he, "is looked upon as bereft of common sense that gives credit to the relations of party-writers; nay, his own friends shake their heads at him and consider him in no other light than as an officious tool or a well-meaning idiot. When it was formerly the fashion to husband

[1] *Spectator*, No. 399.

a lie and trump it up in some extraordinary emergency it generally did execution, and was not a little useful to the faction that made use of it; but at present every man is upon his guard: the artifice has been too often repeated to take effect."[1]

Sir Roger de Coverley "often closes his narrative with reflections on the mischief that parties do in the country."

"There cannot," says the *Spectator* himself, "a greater judgment befall a country than such a dreadful spirit of division as rends a government into two distinct people and makes them greater strangers and more averse to one another than if they were actually two different nations. The effects of such a division are pernicious to the last degree, not only with regard to those advantages which they give the common enemy, but to those private evils which they produce in the heart of almost every particular person. This influence is very fatal both to men's morals and to their understandings; it sinks the virtue of a nation, and not only so, but destroys even common sense."[2]

Nothing in the work of Addison is more suggestive of the just and well-balanced character of his genius than his papers on Women. It has been already said that the seventeenth century exhibits the decay of the Feudal Ideal. The passionate adoration with which women were regarded in the age of chivalry degenerated after the Restoration into a habit of insipid gallantry or of brutal license. Men of fashion found no mean for their affections between a Sacharissa and a Duchess of Cleveland, while the domestic standard of the time reduced the remainder of the sex to the position of virtuous but uninteresting household drudges. Of woman as the companion and the helpmate of man, the source of all the grace and refinements of social intercourse, no trace

[1] *Spectator*, No. 507. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 125.

is to be found in the literature of the Restoration except in the Eve of Milton's still unstudied poem; it is not too much to say that she was the creation of the *Spectator*.

The feminine ideal, at which the essayists of the period aimed, is very well described by Steele in a style which he imitated from Addison:—

"The other day," he writes, in the character of a fictitious female correspondent, "we were several of us at a tea-table, and, according to custom and your own advice, had the *Spectator* read among us. It was that paper wherein you are pleased to treat with great freedom that character which you call a woman's man. We gave up all the kinds you have mentioned except those who, you say, are our constant visitants. I was upon the occasion commissioned by the company to write to you and tell you 'that we shall not part with the men we have at present until the men of sense think fit to relieve them and give us their company in their stead.' You cannot imagine but we love to hear reason and good sense better than the ribaldry we are at present entertained with, but we must have company, and among us very inconsiderable is better than none at all. We are made for the cements of society, and come into the world to create relations amongst mankind, and solitude is an unnatural being to us." [1]

In contrast with the character of the writer of this letter—a type which is always recurring in the *Spectator*—modest and unaffected, but at the same time shrewd, witty, and refined, are introduced very eccentric specimens of womanhood, all tending to illustrate the derangement of the social order, the masculine woman, the learned woman, the female politician, besides those that more properly belong to the nature of the sex, the prude and the coquette. A very graceful example of Addison's peculiar humour is found in his satire on that false ambition in women which prompts them to imitate the manners of men:—

[1] *Spectator*, No. 158.

"The girls of quality," he writes, describing the customs of the Republic of Women, "from six to twelve years old were put to public schools, where they learned to box and play at cudgels, with several other accomplishments of the same nature, so that nothing was more usual than to see a little miss returning home at night with a broken pate or two or three teeth knocked out of her head. They were afterwards taught to ride the great horse, to shoot, dart, or sling, and listed themselves into several companies in order to perfect themselves in military exercises. No woman was to be married till she had killed her man. The ladies of fashion used to play with young lions instead of lap-dogs; and when they had made any parties of diversion, instead of entertaining themselves at ombre and piquet, they would wrestle and pitch the bar for a whole afternoon together. There was never any such thing as a blush seen or a sigh heard in the whole commonwealth."[1]

The amazon was a type of womanhood peculiarly distasteful to Addison, whose humour delighted itself with all the curiosities and refinements of feminine caprice—the fan, the powder-box, and the petticoat. Nothing can more characteristically suggest the exquisiteness of his fancy than a comparison of Swift's verses on a *Lady's Dressing-Room* with the following, which evidently gave Pope a hint for one of the happiest passages in *The Rape of the Lock*:—

"The single dress of a woman of quality is often the product of a hundred climates. The muff and the fan come together from the different ends of the earth. The scarf is sent from the torrid zone, and the tippet from beneath the Pole. The brocade petticoat rises out of the mines of Peru, and the diamond necklace out of the bowels of Indostan."[2]

To turn to Addison's artistic genius the crowning evidence of his powers is the design and the execution

[1] *Spectator*, No. 434. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 69.

of the *Spectator*. Many writers, and among them Macaulay, have credited Steele with the invention of the *Spectator* as well as of the *Tatler*; but I think that a close examination of the opening papers in the former will not only prove, almost to demonstration, that on this occasion Steele was acting as the lieutenant of his friend, but will also show the admirable artfulness of the means by which Addison executed his intention. The purpose of the *Spectator* is described in the tenth number, which is by Addison:—

"I shall endeavour," said he, "to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality, that my readers may, if possible, both ways find their account in the speculation of the day. And to the end that their virtue and discretion may not be short, transient, intermitting starts of thought, I have resolved to refresh their memories from day to day till I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age has fallen."

That is to say, his design was "to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature," so that the conscience of society might recognise in a dramatic form the character of its lapses from virtue and reason. The indispensable instrument for the execution of this design was the *Spectator* himself, the silent embodiment of right reason and good taste, who is obviously the conception of Addison.

"I live in the world rather as a spectator of mankind than as one of the species by which means I have made myself a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant, and artizan, without ever meddling with any practical part in life. I am very well versed in the theory of a husband, or a father, and can discern the errors in the economy, business, and diversion of others better than those who are engaged in them; as standers-by discover blots which are apt to escape those

who are in the game. I never espoused any party with violence, and am resolved to observe an exact neutrality between the Whigs and Tories unless I shall be forced to declare myself by the hostilities of either side. In short, I have acted in all the parts of my life as a looker-on, which is the character I intend to preserve in this paper."

In order, however, to give this somewhat inanimate figure life and action, he is represented as the principal member of a club, his associates consisting of various representatives of the chief "interests" of society. We can scarcely doubt that the club was part of the original and central conception of the work, and if this be so, a new light is thrown on some of the features in the characters of the *Spectator* which have hitherto rather perplexed the critics.

"The *Spectator's* friends," says Macaulay, "were first sketched by Steele. Four of the club—the templar, the clergyman, the soldier, and the merchant—were uninteresting figures, fit only for a background. But the other two—an old country baronet and an old town rake—though not delineated with a very delicate pencil, had some good strokes. Addison took the rude outlines into his own hands, retouched them, coloured them, and is in truth the creator of the Sir Roger de Coverley and the Will Honeycomb with whom we are all familiar."

This is a very misleading account of the matter. It implies that the characters in the *Spectator* were mere casual conceptions of Steele's; that Addison knew nothing about them till he saw Steele's rough draft; and that he, and he alone, is the creator of the finished character of Sir Roger de Coverley. But, as a matter of fact, the character of Sir Roger is full of contradictions and inconsistencies; and the want of unity which it presents is easily explained by the fact that it is the

work of four different hands. Sixteen papers on the subject were contributed by Addison, seven by Steele, three by Budgell, and one by Tickell. Had Sir Roger been, as Macaulay seems to suggest, merely the stray phantom of Steele's imagination, it is very unlikely that so many different painters should have busied themselves with his portrait. But he was from the first intended to be a *type* of a country gentleman, just as much as Don Quixote was an imaginative representation of many Spanish gentlemen whose brains had been turned by the reading of romances. In both cases the type of character was so common and so truly conceived as to lend itself easily to the treatment of writers who approached it with various conceptions and very unequal degrees of skill. Any critic, therefore, who regards Sir Roger de Coverley as the abstract conception of a single mind is certain to misconceive the character. This error lies at the root of Johnson's description of the knight :—

"Of the characters," says he, "feigned or exhibited in the *Spectator*, the favourite of Addison was Sir Roger de Coverley, of whom he had formed a very delicate and discriminated idea, which he would not suffer to be violated; and therefore when Steele had shown him innocently picking up a girl in the Temple and taking her to a tavern, he drew upon himself so much of his friend's indignation that he was forced to appease him by a promise of forbearing Sir Roger for the time to come. . . . It may be doubted whether Addison ever filled up his original delineation. He describes his knight as having his imagination somewhat warped; but of this perversion he has made very little use. The irregularities in Sir Roger's conduct seem not so much the effects of a mind deviating from the beaten track of life by the perpetual pressure of some overwhelming idea, as of habitual rusticity and that negligence which solitary grandeur naturally generates. The variable weather of the mind, the

flying vapours of incipient madness, which from time to time cloud reason without eclipsing it, it requires so much nicety to exhibit, that Addison seems to have been deterred from prosecuting his own design."

But Addison never had any design of the kind. Steele indeed describes Sir Roger in the second number of the *Spectator* as "a gentleman that is very singular in his behaviour," but he added that "his singularities proceed from his good sense, and are contradictions to the manners of the world, only, as he thinks, the world is in the wrong." Addison regarded the knight from a different point of view. "My friend Sir Roger," he says, "amidst all his good qualities is *something of a humourist;* his virtues as well as imperfections are, as it were, tinged by a certain extravagance which makes them particularly his, and distinguishes them from those of other men. This cast of mind, as it is generally very innocent in itself, so it renders his conversation highly agreeable and more delightful than the same degree of sense and virtue would appear in their common and ordinary colours."

The fact is, as I have already said, that it had evidently been predetermined by the designers of the *Spectator* that the Club should consist of certain recognised and familiar types; the different writers in turns worked on these types, each for his own purpose and according to the bent of his own genius. Steele gave the first sketch of Sir Roger in a few rough but vigorous strokes, which were afterwards greatly refined and altered by Addison. In Steele's hands the knight appears indeed as a country squire, but he has also a town-house in Soho Square, then the most fashionable part of London

He had apparently been originally "a fine gentleman," and only acquired his old-fashioned rusticity of manners in consequence of a disappointment in love. All his oddities date from this adventure, though his heart has outlived the effects of it. "There is," we are told, "such a mirthful cast in his behaviour that he is rather beloved than esteemed." Steele's imagination had evidently been chiefly caught by the humour of Sir Roger's love affair, which is made to reflect the romantic cast of poetry affected after the Restoration, and forms the subject of two papers in the series; in two others—recording respectively the knight's kindness to his servants, and his remarks on the portraits of his ancestors—the writer takes up the idea of Addison; while another gives an account of a dispute between Sir Roger and Sir Andrew Freeport on the merits of the monied interest. Addison, on the other hand, had formed a far finer conception of the character of the country gentleman, and one that approaches the portrait of Don Quixote. As a humourist he perceived the incongruous position in modern society of one nourished in the beliefs, principles, and traditions of the old feudal world; and hence, whenever the knight is brought into contact with modern ideas, he invests his observations, as the *Spectator* says, with "a certain extravagance" which constitutes their charm. Such are the papers describing his behaviour at church, his inclination to believe in witchcraft, and his Tory principles: such, in another vein, are his criticisms in the theatre; his opinions of Spring Gardens; and his delightful reflections on the tombs in Westminster Abbey. But Addison was also fully alive to the beauty and nobility of the feudal idea, which he brings out with great

animation in the various papers describing the patriarchal relations existing between Sir Roger and his servants, retainers, and tenants, closing the series with the truly pathetic account of the knight's death. It is to be observed that he drops altogether Steele's idea of Sir Roger having once been a man of fashion, which is indeed discarded by Steele himself when co-operating with his friend on the picture of country life. Addison also quite disregards Steele's original hint about "the humble desires" of his hero; and he only once makes incidental mention of the widow.

Budgell contributed three papers on the subject, two in imitation of Addison; one describing a fox-hunt, and the other giving Sir Roger's opinion on beards; the third, in imitation of Steele, showing Sir Roger's state of mind on hearing of the addresses of Sir David Dundrum to the widow. The number of the *Spectator* which is said to have so greatly displeased Addison was written, not, as Johnson says, by Steele, but by Tickell. It goes far to confirm my supposition that the characters of the Club had been agreed upon beforehand. The trait which Tickell describes would have been natural enough in an ordinary country gentleman, though it was inconsistent with the fine development of Sir Roger's character in the hands of Addison.

In his capacity of critic Addison has been variously judged, and, it may be added, generally undervalued. We find that Johnson's contemporaries were reluctant to allow him the name of critic. "His criticism," Johnson explains, "is condemned as tentative or experimental rather than scientific; and he is considered as deciding by taste rather than by principles." But if Aristotle is

right in saying that the virtuous man is the standard of virtue, the man of sound instincts and perceptions ought certainly to be accepted as a standard in the more debatable region of taste. There can, at any rate, be no doubt that Addison's artistic judgments founded on instinct were frequently much nearer the mark than Johnson's, though these were based on principle.. Again Macaulay says: "The least valuable of Addison's contributions to the *Spectator* are, in the judgment of our age, his critical papers;" but he adds patronisingly: "The very worst of them is creditable to him when the character of the school in which he had been trained is fairly considered. The best of them were much too good for his readers. In truth, he was not so far behind our generation as he was before his own." By "the school in which he had been trained," Macaulay doubtless meant the critical traditions established by Boileau and Bouhours, and he would have justified the disparagement implied in his reference to them by pointing to the pedantic intolerance and narrowness of view which these traditions encouraged. But in all matters of this kind there is loss and gain. If Addison's generation was much more insensible than our own to a large portion of imaginative truth, it had a far keener perception of the laws and limits of expression; and, granted that Voltaire was wrong in regarding Shakespeare as an "inspired barbarian," he would never have made the mistake which critics now make every day of mistaking nonsense for poetry

But it may well be questioned if Addison's criticism is only "tentative and experimental." The end of criticism is surely to produce a habit of reasoning

rightly on matters of taste and imagination; and, with the exception of Sir Joshua Reynolds, no English critic has accomplished more in this direction than Addison. Before his time Dryden had scattered over a number of prefaces various critical remarks admirably felicitous in thought and racy in expression. But he had made no attempt to write upon the subject systematically; and in practice he gave himself up without an effort to satisfy the tastes which a corrupt Court had formed, partly on the "false wit" of Cowley's following, partly on the extravagance and conceit of the French school of Romance. Addison, on the other hand, set himself to correct this depraved fashion by establishing in England, on a larger and more liberal basis, the standards of good breeding and common sense which Boileau had already popularised in France. Nothing can be more just and discriminating than his papers on the difference between true and false wit.[1] He was the first to endeavour to define the limits of art and taste in his essays on the *Pleasures of the Imagination;*[2] and, though his theory on the subject is obviously superficial, it sufficiently proves that his method of reasoning on questions of taste was much more than "tentative and experimental." "I could wish," he says, "there were authors who, beside the mechanical rules, which a man of very little taste may discourse upon, would enter into the very spirit and soul of fine writing, and show us the several sources of that pleasure which rises in the mind on the perusal of a noble work." His studies of the French drama prevented him from appreciating the great Eliza-

[1] *Spectator*, Nos. 58–63, inclusive.
[2] *Ibid.*, Nos. 411–421, inclusive.

bethan school of tragedy, yet many stray remarks in the *Spectator* show how deeply he was impressed by the greatness of Shakespeare's genius, while his criticisms on Tragedy did much to banish the tumid extravagance of the romantic style. His papers on Milton achieved the triumph of making a practically unknown poem one of the most popular classics in the language, and he was more than half a century before his age in his appreciation of the beauties of the English ballads. In fact, finding English taste in hopeless confusion, he left it in admirable order; and to those who are inclined to depreciate his powers as a critic the following observations of Johnson—not a very favourable judge—may be commended:—

"It is not uncommon for those who have grown wise by the labour of others to add a little of their own, and overlook their masters. Addison is now despised by some who perhaps would never have seen his defects but by the light he afforded them. That he always wrote as he would write now cannot be affirmed; his instructions were such as the characters of his readers made proper. That general knowledge, which now circulates in common talk, was in his time rarely to be found. Men not professing learning were not ashamed of ignorance; and in the female world any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured. His purpose was to infuse literary curiosity by gentle and unsuspected conveyance into the gay, the idle, and the wealthy: he therefore presented knowledge in the most alluring form, not lofty and austere, but accessible and familiar. When he showed them their defects, he showed them likewise that they might be easily supplied. His attempt succeeded; inquiry awakened and comprehension expanded. An emulation of intellectual elegance was excited, and from this time to our own life has been gradually exalted, and conversation purified and enlarged."[1]

[1] *Life of Addison.*

The essence of Addison's humour is irony. "One slight lineament of his character," says Johnson, "Swift has preserved. It was his practice, when he found any man invincibly wrong, to flatter his opinions by acquiescence, and sink him yet deeper to absurdity." The same characteristic manifests itself in his writings under a great variety of forms. Sometimes it appears in the seemingly logical premises from which he draws an obviously absurd conclusion, as for instance:—

"If in a multitude of counsellors there is safety, we ought to think ourselves the securest nation in the world. Most of our garrets are inhabited by statesmen, who watch over the liberties of their country, and make a shift to keep themselves from starving by taking into their care the properties of all their fellow-subjects."[1]

On other occasions he ridicules some fashion of taste by a perfectly grave and simple description of its object. Perhaps the most admirable specimen of this oblique manner is his satire on the Italian opera in the number of the *Spectator* describing the various lions who had fought on the stage with Nicolini. This highly-finished paper deserves to be quoted *in extenso*:—

"There is nothing of late years has afforded matter of greater amusement to the town than Signor Nicolini's combat with a lion in the Haymarket, which has been very often exhibited to the general satisfaction of most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom of Great Britain. Upon the first rumour of this intended combat it was confidently affirmed, and is still believed by many in both galleries, that there would be a tame lion sent from the tower every opera in order to be killed by Hydaspes. This report, though altogether groundless, so universally prevailed in the upper regions of the playhouse, that some of the refined politicians in those parts of the audience gave it out in a whisper that the lion was a cousin-

[1] *Spectator*, No. 556.

german of the tiger who made his appearance in King William's days, and that the stage would be supplied with lions at the public expense during the whole session. Many likewise were the conjectures of the treatment which this lion was to meet with at the hands of Signor Nicolini; some supposed that he was to subdue him in recitativo, as Orpheus used to serve the wild beasts in his time, and afterwards to knock him on the head; some fancied that the lion would not pretend to lay his paws upon the hero, by reason of the received opinion that a lion will not hurt a virgin; several, who pretended to have seen the opera in Italy, had informed their friends that the lion was to act a part in High Dutch, and roar twice or thrice to a thorough-bass before he fell at the feet of Hydaspes. To clear up a matter that was so variously reported, I have made it my business to examine whether this pretended lion is really the savage he appears to be or only a counterfeit.

"But before I communicate my discoveries, I must acquaint the public that upon my walking behind the scenes last winter, as I was thinking upon something else, I accidentally jostled against an enormous animal that extremely startled me, and, upon my nearer survey of it, appeared to be a lion rampant. The lion, seeing me very much surprised, told me, in a gentle voice, that I might come by him if I pleased; 'for,' says he, 'I do not intend to hurt anybody.' I thanked him very kindly and passed by him, and in a little time after saw him leap upon the stage and act his part with very great applause. It has been observed by several that the lion has changed his manner of acting twice or thrice since his first appearance; which will not seem strange when I acquaint my reader that the lion has been changed upon the audience three several times. The first lion was a candle-snuffer, who, being a fellow of testy choleric temper, overdid his part, and would not suffer himself to be killed so easily as he ought to have done; besides it was observed of him that he became more surly every time he came out of the lion; and having dropped some words in ordinary conversation as if he had not fought his best, and that he suffered himself to be thrown on his back in the scuffle, and that he could wrestle with Mr. Nicolini for what he pleased out of his lion's skin, it was thought proper to discard him, and it is verily believed to this day that, had

he been brought upon the stage another time, he would certainly have done mischief. Besides it was objected against the first lion that he reared himself so high upon his hinder paws and walked in so erect a posture that he looked more like an old man than a lion.

"The second lion was a tailor by trade who belonged to the playhouse, and had the character of a mild and peaceable man in his profession. If the former was too furious, this was too sheepish for his part, insomuch that after a short modest walk upon the stage he would fall at the first touch of Hydaspes, without grappling with him and giving him an opportunity of showing his variety of Italian trips. It is said, indeed, that he once gave him a rip in his flesh-coloured doublet; but this was only to make work for himself in his private character of a tailor. I must not omit that it was this second lion who treated me with so much humanity behind the scenes.

"The acting lion at present is, as I am informed, a country gentleman, who does it for his diversion, but desires his name may be concealed. He says, very handsomely in his own excuse, that he does not act for gain; that he indulges an innocent pleasure in it; and that it is better to pass away an evening in this manner than in gaming and drinking: but he says at the same time, with a very agreeable raillery upon himself, that, if his name were known, the ill-natured world might call him 'the ass in the lion's skin.' This gentleman's temper is made out of such a happy mixture of the mild and the choleric, that he outdoes both his predecessors, and has drawn together greater audiences than have been known in the memory of man.

"I must not conclude my narrative without taking notice of a groundless report that has been raised to a gentleman's disadvantage, of whom I must declare myself an admirer; namely, that Signor Nicolini and the lion have been seen sitting peaceably by one another and smoking a pipe together behind the scenes; by which their common enemies would insinuate that it is but a sham combat which they represent upon the stage: but upon inquiry I find that if any such correspondence has passed between them, it was not till the combat was over, when the lion was to be looked on as dead according to the received rules of the drama. Besides, this is

what is practised every day in Westminster Hall, where nothing is more usual than to see a couple of lawyers who have been tearing each other to pieces in the court embracing one another as soon as they are out of it." [1]

In a somewhat different vein, the ridicule cast by the *Spectator* on the fashions of his day, by anticipating the judgment of posterity on himself, is equally happy:

"As for his speculations, notwithstanding the several obsolete words and obscure phrases of the age in which he lived, we still understand enough of them to see the diversions and characters of the English nation in his time: not but that we are to make allowance for the mirth and humour of the author, who has doubtless strained many representations of things beyond the truth. For, if we must interpret his words in their literal meaning, we must suppose that women of the first quality used to pass away whole mornings at a puppet show: that they attested their principles by their patches: that an audience would sit out an evening to hear a dramatical performance written in a language which they did not understand: that chairs and flowerpots were introduced as actors upon the British stage: that a promiscuous assembly of men and women were allowed to meet at midnight in masks within the verge of the Court; with many improbabilities of the like nature. We must therefore in these and in the like cases suppose that these remote hints and allusions aimed at some certain follies which were then in vogue, and which at present we have not any notion of." [2]

His power of ridiculing keenly without malignity is of course best shown in his character of Sir Roger de Coverley, whose delightful simplicity of mind is made the medium of much good-natured satire on the manners of the Tory country-gentlemen of the period. One of the most exquisite touches is the description of the extraordinary conversion of a dissenter by the Act against Occasional Conformity.

[1] *Spectator*, No. 13. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 101.

"He (Sir Roger) then launched out into praise of the late Act of Parliament for securing the Church of England, and told me with great satisfaction that he believed it already began to take effect, for that a rigid dissenter who chanced to dine in his house on Christmas day had been observed to eat very plentifully of his plum-porridge."[1]

The mixture of fashionable contempt for book-learning, blended with shrewd mother-wit, is well represented in the character of Will Honeycomb, who "had the discretion not to go out of his depth, and had often a certain way of making his real ignorance appear a seeming one." One of Will's happiest flights is on the subject of ancient looking-glasses. "Nay," says he, "I remember Mr. Dryden in his *Ovid* tells us of a swinging fellow called Polypheme, that made use of the sea for his looking-glass, and could never dress himself to advantage but in a calm."

Budgell, Steele, and Addison seem all to have worked on the character of Will Honeycomb, which, however, presents none of the inconsistencies that appear in the portrait of Sir Roger de Coverley. Addison was evidently pleased with it, and in his own inimitable ironic manner gave it its finishing touches by making Will, in his character of a fashionable gallant, write two letters scoffing at wedlock and then marry a farmer's daughter. The conclusion of the letter in which he announces his fate to the *Spectator* is an admirable specimen of Addison's humour:

"As for your fine women I need not tell thee that I know them. I have had my share in their graces, but no more of that. It shall be my business hereafter to live the life of an honest man, and to act as becomes the master of a family. I question not but I shall draw upon me the raillery of the

[1] *Spectator*, No. 269.

town, and be treated to the tune of "The Marriage-hater Matched;" but I am prepared for it. I have been as witty as others in my time. To tell thee truly I saw such a tribe of fashionable young fluttering coxcombs shot up that I do not think my post of an *homme de ruelle* any longer tenable. I felt a certain stiffness in my limbs which entirely destroyed the jauntiness of air I was once master of. Besides, for I must now confess my age to thee, I have been eight-and-forty above these twelve years. Since my retirement into the country will make a vacancy in the Club, I could wish that you would fill up my place with my friend Tom Dapperwit. He has an infinite deal of fire, and knows the town. For my own part, as I have said before, I shall endeavour to live hereafter suitable to a man in my station, as a prudent head of a family, a good husband, a careful father (when it shall so happen), and as

"Your most sincere friend and humble servant,

"WILLIAM HONEYCOMB."[1]

I have already alluded to the delight with which the fancy of Addison played round the caprices of female attire. The following—an extract from the paper on the "fair sex" which specially roused the spleen of Swift—is a good specimen of his style when in this vein:—

"To return to our female heads. The ladies have been for some time in a kind of moulting season with regard to that part of their dress, having cast great quantities of ribbon, lace, and cambric, and in some measure reduced that part of the human figure to the beautiful globular form which is natural to it. We have for a great while expected what kind of ornament would be substituted in the place of those antiquated commodes. But our female projectors were all the last summer so taken up with the improvement of their petticoats that they had not time to attend to anything else; but having at length sufficiently adorned their lower parts, they now begin to turn their thoughts upon the other ex-

[1] *Spectator*, No. 530.

tremity, as well remembering the old kitchen proverb, 'that if you light your fire at both ends, the middle will shift for itself.'" [1]

Addison may be said to have almost created and wholly perfected English prose as an instrument for the expression of *social* thought. Prose had of course been written in many different manners before his time. Bacon, Cowley, and Temple had composed essays; Hooker, Sir Thomas Browne, Hobbes, and Locke philosophical treatises; Milton controversial pamphlets; Dryden critical prefaces; Raleigh and Clarendon histories; Taylor, Barrow, South, and Tillotson sermons. But it cannot be said that any of these had founded a prose style which, besides being a reflection of the mind of the writer, could be taken as representing the genius and character of the nation. They write as if they were thinking apart from their audience, or as if they were speaking to it either from an inferior or superior position. The essayists had taken as their model Montaigne, and their style is therefore stamped, so to speak, with the character of soliloquy; the preachers, who perhaps did more than any writers to guide the genius of the language, naturally addressed their hearers with the authority of their office; Milton, even in controversy, rises from the natural sublimity of his mind to heights of eloquence to which the ordinary idioms of society could not have borne him; while Dryden, using the language with a raciness and rhythm probably unequalled in our literature, nevertheless exhibits in his prefaces an air of deference towards the various patrons he addresses. Moreover, many of the earlier prose

[1] *Spectator*, No. 265.

writers had aimed at standards of diction which were inconsistent with the genius of the English tongue. Bacon, for instance, disfigures his style with the witty antitheses which found favour with the Elizabethan and early Stuart writers; Hooker, Milton, and Browne construct their sentences on a Latin model, which, though it often gives a certain dignity of manner, prevents anything like ease, simplicity, and lucidity of expression. Thus Hooker delights in inversions; both he and Milton protract their periods by the insertion of many subordinate clauses; and Browne "projicit ampullas et sesquipedalia verba" till the Saxon element seems almost eliminated from his style.

Addison took features of his style from almost all his predecessors: he assumes the characters of essayist, moralist, philosopher, and critic, but he blends them all together in his new capacity of journalist. He had accepted the public as his judges; and he writes as if some critical representative of the public were at his elbow putting to the test of reason every sentiment and every expression. Warton tells us in his *Essay on Pope* that Addison was so fastidious in composition that he would often stop the press to alter a preposition or conjunction. And this evidence is corroborated in a very curious and interesting manner by the MS. of some of Addison's essays, discovered by Mr. Dykes Campbell in 1858.[1] A sentence in one of the papers on the *Pleasures of the Imagination* shows, by the various stages through which it passed before its form seemed satisfactory to the writer, what nice attention he gave to the balance,

[1] I have to thank Mr. Campbell for his kindness and courtesy in sending me the volume containing this collection.

rhythm, and lucidity of his periods. In its original shape the sentence was written thus :—

"For this reason we find the poets always crying up a Country Life ; where Nature is left to herself, and appears to y^e^ best advantage."

This is rather bald, and the MS. is accordingly corrected as follows :—

"For this reason we find all Fancifull men, and y^e^ poets in particular, still in love with a Country Life ; where Nature is left to herself, and furnishes out all y^e^ variety of Scenes y^t^ are most delightful to y^e^ Imagination.

The text as it stands is this :—

"For this reason we always find the poet in love with a country life, where nature appears in the greatest perfection, and furnishes out all those scenes that are most apt to delight the imagination." [1]

This is certainly the best both in point of sense and sound. Addison perceived that there was a certain contradiction in the idea of Nature being "left to herself," and at the same time *furnishing* scenes for the pleasure of the imagination : he therefore imparted the notion of design by striking out the former phrase and substituting 'seen in perfection ;" and he emphasised the idea by afterwards changing "delightful" into the stronger phrase "apt to delight." The improvement of the rhythm of the sentence in its final form is obvious.

With so much elaboration of style it is natural that there should be in Addison's essays a disappearance of that egotism which is a characteristic—and a charming one—of Montaigne ; his moralising is natural, for the age required it, but is free from the censoriousness of

[1] *Spectator*, No. 414.

the preacher; his critical and philosophical papers all assume an intelligence in his reader equal to his own.

This perfection of breeding in writing is an art which vanishes with the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. Other critics, other humourists have made their mark in English literature, but no second Addison has appeared. Johnson took him for his model so far as to convey lessons of morality to the public by means of periodical essays. But he confesses that he addressed his audience in tones of "dictatorial instruction;" and any one who compares the ponderous sententiousness and the elaborate antithesis of the *Rambler* with the light and rhythmical periods of the *Spectator* will perceive that the spirit of preaching is gaining ground on the genius of conversation. Charles Lamb, again, has passages which, for mere delicacy of humour, are equal to anything in Addison's writings. But the superiority of Addison consists in this, that he expresses the humour of the life about him, while Lamb is driven to look at its oddities from outside. He is not, like Addison, a moralist or a satirist; the latter indeed performed his task so thoroughly that the turbulent license of Mohocks, Tityre Tus, and such like brotherhoods, gradually disappeared before the advance of a tame and orderly public opinion. To Lamb, looking back on the primitive stages of society from a safe distance, vice itself seemed pardonable because picturesque, much in the same way as travellers began to admire the loneliness and the grandeur of nature when they were relieved from apprehensions for the safety of their purses and their necks. His humour is that of a sentimentalist; it dwells on odd nooks and corners, and describes quaint survivals in men and things. For our

own age, when all that is picturesque in society is being levelled by a dull utilitarianism, this vein of eccentric imagination has a special charm, but the taste is likely to be a transient one. Mrs. Battle will amuse so long as this generation remembers the ways of its grandmothers; two generations hence the point of its humour will probably be lost. But the figure of Sir Roger de Coverley, though it belongs to a bygone stage of society, is as durable as human nature itself, and while the language lasts the exquisite beauty of the colours in which it is preserved will excite the same kind of pleasure. Scarcely below the portrait of the good knight will be ranked the character of his friend and biographer, the silent Spectator of men. A grateful posterity, remembering what it owes to him, will continue to assign him the reputation he coveted: "It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell at clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses."

INDEX

Absalom and Achitophel (Dryden's), 58
Absolutism, 11
Account of the Greatest English Poets, 31; immaturity of, 35
Addison, Joseph, scant contemporary records of, 1; Tickell's bibliography of, 1; his shyness and reserve, 2, 31; his charm of conversation, 2; his satire, 3, 182; his statue, 3; his merits universally acknowledged, 3; his task and its difficulties, 7-8; family history, 23 *seq.*; his father's literary abilities, 23-24; Steele's description of the Addison family, 26; Addison runs away from school, 27; goes to Charter House, 28; attainments in Greek and Latin, 28-29, 48-49; at Queen's College (Oxford), 29; made Fellow of Magdalen, 31; his acquaintances at Oxford, 30; begins to write, 31 *seq.*; is introduced to literary men in London, 35; abandons the idea of taking Orders, 36-37; travels on the Continent, 39; effects of classical training, 50; pecuniary embarrassments, 54; death of his father, 54; return to England, 54; entry into political life, 55; his change of circumstances, 55, 64; writes *The Campaign*, 63-64; becomes Under-Secretary of State, 68, 69; writes libretto for an English opera, 72; is made Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 74; his remarks on corrupt officials, 75; his losses, 80; he contributes to the *Tatler*, 99; founds the *Spectator* with Steele, 105; his opportunities, 114; his genius essentially undramatic, 122; produces *Cato*, 124; his quarrel with Pope, 131 *seq.*; his nervousness, 148, 156; becomes Secretary again to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 149; his probity, 149; marries the Countess of Warwick, 153 *seq.*; is made a Secretary of State, 156; retires from public life, 157; dies at Holland House, 158; his reported intemperance, 159; burial in Westminster Abbey, 160; his genius, 161 *seq.*; his serenity and spirit of independence, 162; as reconciler of parties and founder of public opinion, 163; his endeavours to improve public morals, 167-168; his reputation as a critic, 178 *seq.*; his irony, 182; as journalist, 189; his fastidiousness in composition, 189-190; posterity's verdict, 192
Address to King William, 35

Aikin, Miss, Addison's biographer, 54, 80
Anecdotes, 27, 103, 123, 140
Anne, Queen, 60, 148, 151
Apennines, description of the, 51
Architecture, 49-50
Art of Criticism (Pope's), 133
"Atticus," 131 ; verses on, 143-144
Authority, principle of, 7-8

Beauty, natural and artificial, 45
Berkeley, Bishop, 159
Blenheim, battle of, 62
Boileau, 34, 47
Buckingham, Duke of, 56
Budgell, Eustace, 76 ; Pope's lines on, 77
Burial, lines on Addison's, 160
Burke on conservative institutions, 5-6
Burney, Dr., on Addison's musical knowledge, 74
Button's Coffee House, 134, 140

Campaign, The, criticism of, 64 ; Addison's treatment of the subject, 65 ; extracts from, 66-67 ; finest passage in, 67 ; Johnson's criticism of, 67
'Captain Sentry,' 107
Cato, 51, 115 *seq.* ; remarks on, 116, 117, 119, 122 ; its formal "correctness," 119 ; Pope's Prologue to, 120 ; Johnson's criticism of, 121 ; its deficiencies as an acted play, 122 ; rehearsal of, 123-124 ; Pope's suggestions and alterations in, 124 ; Epilogue to, 124 ; production of, 124 ; enthusiastic reception of, 124-125 ; Pope's account of the performance, 125 ; its unprecedented run, 126 ; its fame on the Continent, 126 ; extracts from, 128-129 ; its imitation of the French manner, 130
Charles II., his tastes and sympathies, 11-13
Chaucer, 33
Church and State, 8
Civil War, the, 8
"Classic ground," origin of phrase, 48
Clubs, Addison on, 61
Coffee Houses as literary centres, 91
Collier, Jeremy, 93-94, 96
Comedies, the Caroline, 15-16
Congreve, 33
Conservative institutions, Burke on, 5-6
Court (Charles II.), corruption of, 11-12
Cowley, 4 ; his treatment of love, 12 ; Addison's praise of, 34
"Cuckoldom," 167

Defoe, Daniel, 87
Democracy, rising power of, 21
Dennis, John, 41, 137 ; on *Cato*, 122-127
Dialogue on Medals (Addison's), 51
Dissuading from Poetry (Oldham's), 56-57
Dorset, Earl of, 56
Drama, after the Restoration, 14 ; Addison on the modern, 117 ; ancient and modern compared, 117 ; the Elizabethan, 14
Drummer, The (Pope's), 149-150
Dryden, 16, 20, 33, 34 ; Poet Laureate, 58, 59
Duelling, Steele's attack on, 104
Dunton, John, 87
D'Urfey, Tom, 9

Epilogues of plays, 14 ; indecencies of, 18
Epistle from Italy (Addison's), 51
Essay on Man (Pope's), tendency to Deism of, 5
Etherege, Sir George, 16

Faery Queen, The, criticism of, 33
Feudalism, 8
Fontainebleau, description of, 45

France, literature in, 44
Freeholder, 9, 151, 152, 153
French people, Addison on, 47

Gambling, Steele's attack on, 103
Georgics, Addison's translation of, 31 ; essay on, 33
Gothic architecture, Addison on, 49-50
Grand tour, effects of the, 41 ; Pope on, 41-42 ; Addison's benefits from, 42
Greek tragedies compared with Shakespeare's, 118
Guardian (Steele's), 114

Halifax, Lord, 63
Herodotus, 32
Hertford, Lord, 52-54
Hind and Panther, The (Dryden's), 58
Hydaspes, 74, 182 *seq.*

Iliad, Pope's translation, 133 ; Tickell's translation, 133-139
Introduction to the Sacrament (Lancelot Addison's), 23
'Isaac Bickerstaff,' 90, 92
Italian Opera, 70-71, 182 *seq.* ; Addison's dislike of, 74

James II., 59
'Jeremy Distaff,' 92
Johnson, Samuel, on Addison's style, 3 ; on the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, 108 ; on Addison's critical powers, 181 ; on Addison's favourite character, 175
Journal to Stella (Swift's), 1, 110

'Kidney,' 92
Kit-Kat Club, 52, 61, 147

La Bruyere, 108
Lamb, Charles, on the Caroline comedians, 15 ; Lamb and Addison compared, 191
Land-tenure, 8
Langland, 7
Latin verse composition, value of, 29 ; Addison's skill in, 29, 37-39 ; Pope's low estimate of, 29
L'Estrange, Roger, 84
Letter to Lord Halifax (Addison's) 43
Letters, extracts from Addison's, 46, 47, 53
Life of Dryden (Johnson's), 14
Literature, mock-heroic style, 39 ; under James II. and William III., 59
"Little senate," the, 2
Lives of the Poets (Johnson's), 162
Louis XIV., French literature under, 44
Lovelace, 12
Love-making, 13

Macaulay, eulogy of Addison by, 3 ; on Addison's classical knowledge, 28 *seq.*
Magdalen College (Oxford), its changing political opinions, 30
Malebranche, 47
Manchester, Countess of, Addison's verses on, 61
Mandeville, 2
Man of the Mode (Etherege's), Steele on, 16, 166
Marlborough, Duke of, 62
Marriage, Addison's, 153 *seq.* ; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu on, 154
Medal, The (Dryden's), 58
Mercury (generic title of first newspapers), 83-84
Milan Cathedral, 49
Milton, his Calvinistic opinions, 7 ; Addison's estimate of, 33-34 ; Addison's papers on, 181 ; his genius first appreciated by Steele, 104
Miscellany (Dryden's), 19
'Mistress,' Addison's, 80, 154
Montaigne, his egotism, 190
Montrose, his lyrics, 12
Musæ Anglicanæ, 38 ; contributors to, 38-39
Music in England, 69-70

Nell Gwynne as St. Catherine, 14
Newspaper, the first daily, 82; low estimation of, 83; published under licence, 83

October Club, 9
Oldham, John, 56
Opera, English, 70, 71
Otway, 56
Ovid, 32

'Pacolet,' 92
Paradise Lost, its beauties pointed out by Addison, 4, 112
Party system, evils of, 169-170
Pastorals (Pope's), 136-138
Peace of Ryswick (Addison's), 37
Philippeaux, Abbe, sketch of Addison by, 46
Philips, Ambrose, 135, 136, 138
Pleasures of the Imagination (Addison's), 180
Pope, Alexander, his strange moral twist, 1; his quarrel with Addison, 131 *seq.*; his letters, 138, 140, 141; his sensitiveness and irritability, 139
Press, power of the, 18; freedom of, 86
Printers and publishers, 19
Printing and publishing, proclamation against, 85
Prose, Caroline, 20; Addison's, 188
Protestant Succession, the, 147, 151
Puritanism, 10, 21, 163

"Rake," Steele's disquisition on the, 96
Rambler and *Spectator* compared, 191
Rape of the Lock (Pope's), 135
Reformation, the, 7
Remarks on Italy (Addison's), 43, 78
Renaissance, the Italian, 7
'Republic of Women,' 172
Restoration, the, 8; state of literature after, 1 *seq.*
Revolution of the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco (Lancelot Addison's), 23-24
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, on characteristic styles, 50; as critic, 180
Rochester, Earl of, 56
Rosamond (Addison's), 72-73
Roundhead tyranny, 10

St. James' Coffee House, 91
Salisbury Plain, description of, 27
Sanctity, Puritan notions of, 165
Sedley, 56
Selden, 19
Shadwell, 16
Shakespeare, 33; tragedies, 118; Voltaire on, 126
'Sir Andrew Freeport,' 10, 107
'Sir Roger de Coverley,' 8, 106, 175, 176, 177, 192
Smith, 'Rag,' 38-39
Spectator, published daily, 105; its aims, 107, 173; its mild satire, 110; a "fair sex" paper, 110; its popularity, 110-111; contributors to, 112; its large sale, 113; its well-timed appearance, 113-114; the work of different hands, 174
Spencer, his Puritan doctrines, 7
'Squire Western,' 9
Stage, the, after the Restoration, 17, 93, 95, 166; chief school of manners, 93; Jeremy Collier's attack on, 94-96
Steele, 1; Addison's influence over, 2; first Gazetteer, 85; originator of the *Tatler*, 89; influence of Swift on, 89-90; his naturalness and sympathy, 97; his plea for Shakespeare, 102; expelled from House of Commons, 147; dispute with Addison, 157-158
Swift, 1; fascinated by Addison,

2; his friendship with him, 77 79; his criticism of the *Spectator*, 110

Tale of a Tub (Swift's), 5
Tatler, 81 *seq.*; its aims and methods, 90, 91; origin of the name, 89; its contents, 90, 91; its mottoes, 92; its excellences of style and sentiment, 98; its authorship discovered, 99; Addison's first contribution to, 99; its news articles, 101; its end, 104
Tender Husband (Steele's), 69
Theatres, 18, 19
Tickell, 1, 133, 135, 139, 140 *seq.*
Tonson, Jacob (publisher), 19, 32, 35, 52
Tragedies, artificial and affected style of Caroline, 14; Greek, 118
Translations from the Latin Poets (Dryden's), 19
Travelling, Lord Cowper on, 40, 41
Trial and Conviction of Count Tariff (Addison's), 146

Versifications of Chaucer (Dryden's), 19
Virgil, Addison's translation of, 33
Voltaire on *Cato*, 126; on Shakespeare, 126

Waller, his treatment of love, 13
Wars of the Roses, effect of, 6 *seq.*
Warwick, Countess of (Addison's wife), 131
Wharton, the Earl of, 74-75
Whigs and Tories, 9-10; Addison's Whig bias, 30
White's Chocolate House, 90-91
'Will Honeycomb,' 107, 186-187
William III., 59
Will's Coffee House, 91
'Will Wimble,' 9
Wit, different kinds of, 34
Woman in feudal times, 12, 109; under the Restoration, 109; Addison's ideal of, 13, 109; his favourite subject, 152; his abhorrence of the "masculine" woman, 172; his papers on woman's dress, 172, 187
Wycherley, 16-20
Wycliffe, 7

THE END

Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

SWIFT

SWIFT

BY

LESLIE STEPHEN

London
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1903

All rights reserved

First Edition 1882
Reprinted 1885, 1889, 1899, 1902, 1903 (*twice*)

PREFACE.

The chief materials for a life of Swift are to be found in his writings and correspondence. The best edition is the second of the two edited by Scott (1814 and 1824).

In 1751 Lord Orrery published *Remarks upon the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift.* Orrery, born 1707, had known Swift from about 1732. His remarks give the views of a person of quality of more ambition than capacity, and more anxious to exhibit his own taste than to give full or accurate information.

In 1754, Dr. Delany published *Observations upon Lord Orrery's Remarks,* intended to vindicate Swift against some of Orrery's severe judgments. Delany, born about 1685, became intimate with Swift soon after the dean's final settlement in Ireland. He was then one of the authorities of Trinity College, Dublin. He is the best contemporary authority, so far as he goes.

In 1756 Deane Swift, grandson of Swift's uncle Godwin, and son-in-law to Swift's cousin and faithful guardian, Mrs. Whiteway, published an *Essay upon the Life, Writings, and Character of Dr. Jonathan Swift,* in which he attacks both his predecessors. Deane Swift, born about 1708, had seen little or nothing of his cousin till the year 1738, when the dean's faculties were decaying. His book is foolish and discursive. Deane Swift's son, Theophilus,

communicated a good deal of doubtful matter to Scott, on the authority of family tradition.

In 1765 Hawkesworth, who had no personal knowledge, prefixed a life of Swift to an edition of the works which adds nothing to our information. In 1781 Johnson, when publishing a very perfunctory life of Swift as one of the poets, excused its shortcomings on the ground of having already communicated his thoughts to Hawkesworth. The life is not only meagre but injured by one of Johnson's strong prejudices.

In 1785 Thomas Sheridan produced a pompous and dull life of Swift. He was the son of Swift's most intimate companion during the whole period subsequent to the final settlement in Ireland. The elder Sheridan, however, died in 1738; and the younger, born in 1721, was still a boy when Swift was becoming imbecile.

Contemporary writers, except Delany, have thus little authority; and a number of more or less palpably fictitious anecdotes accumulated round their hero. Scott's life, originally published in 1814, is defective in point of accuracy. Scott did not investigate the evidence minutely, and liked a good story too well to be very particular about its authenticity. The book, however, shows his strong sense and genial appreciation of character; and remains, till this day, by far the best account of Swift's career.

A life which supplies Scott's defects in great measure was given by William Monck Mason, in 1819, in his *History and Antiquities of the Church of St. Patrick*. Monck Mason was an indiscriminate admirer, and has a provoking method of expanding undigested information into monstrous notes, after the precedent of Bayle. But he examined facts with the utmost care, and every biographer must respect his authority.

In 1875 Mr. Forster published the first instalment of a *Life of Swift*. This book, which contains the results of patient and thorough inquiry, was unfortunately interrupted by Mr. Forster's death, and ends at the beginning of 1711. A complete *Life* by Mr. Henry Craik is announced as about to appear.

Besides these books, I ought to mention an *Essay upon the Earlier Part of the Life of Swift*, by the Rev. John Barrett, B.D. and Vice-Provost of Trin. Coll. Dublin (London, 1808); and *The Closing Years of Dean Swift's Life*, by W. R. Wilde, M.R.I.A., F.R.C.S. (Dublin, 1849). This last is a very interesting study of the medical aspects of Swift's life. An essay by Dr. Bucknill, in *Brain* for Jan. 1882, is a remarkable contribution to the same subject.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

EARLY YEARS 1

CHAPTER II.

MOOR PARK AND KILROOT 12

CHAPTER III.

EARLY WRITINGS 32

CHAPTER IV.

LARACOR AND LONDON 51

CHAPTER V.

THE HARLEY ADMINISTRATION 77

CHAPTER VI.

STELLA AND VANESSA 118

CHAPTER VII.

WOOD'S HALFPENCE 147

CHAPTER VIII.

PAGE
GULLIVER'S TRAVELS 168

CHAPTER IX.

DECLINE 186

INDEX 211

SWIFT.

SWIFT.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS.

JONATHAN SWIFT, the famous Dean of St. Patrick's, was the descendant of an old Yorkshire family. One branch had migrated southwards, and in the time of Charles I., Thomas Swift, Jonathan's grandfather, was Vicar of Goodrich, near Ross, in Herefordshire, a fact commemorated by the sweetest singer of Queen Ann's reign in the remarkable lines—

> Jonathan Swift
> Had the gift
> By fatherige, motherige,
> And by brotherige,
> To come from Gotheridge.

Thomas Swift married Elizabeth Dryden, niece of Sir Erasmus, the grandfather of the poet Dryden. By her he became the father of ten sons and four daughters. In the great rebellion he distinguished himself by a loyalty which was the cause of obvious complacency to his descendant. On one occasion he came to the governor of a town held for the king, and being asked what he could do for his Majesty, laid down his coat as an offering. The

governor remarked that his coat was worth little. "Then," said Swift, "take my waistcoat." The waistcoat was lined with three hundred broad pieces—a handsome offering from a poor and plundered clergyman. On another occasion he armed a ford, through which rebel cavalry were to pass, by certain pieces of iron with four spikes, so contrived that one spike must always be uppermost (*caltrops*, in short). Two hundred of the enemy were destroyed by this stratagem. The success of the rebels naturally led to the ruin of this cavalier clergyman; and the record of his calamities forms a conspicuous article in Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy*. He died in 1658, before the advent of the better times in which he might have been rewarded for his loyal services. His numerous family had to struggle for a living. The eldest son, Godwin Swift, was a barrister of Gray's Inn at the time of the Restoration: he was married four times, and three times to women of fortune; his first wife had been related to the Ormond family; and this connexion induced him to seek his fortune in Ireland—a kingdom which at that time suffered, amongst other less endurable grievances, from a deficient supply of lawyers.[1] Godwin Swift was made Attorney-General in the palatinate of Tipperary by the Duke of Ormond. He prospered in his profession, in the subtle parts of which, says his nephew, he was "perhaps a little too dexterous;" and he engaged in various speculations, having at one time what was then the very large income of 3000*l.* a year. Four brothers accompanied this successful Godwin, and shared to some extent in his prosperity. In January, 1666, one of these, Jonathan, married to Abigail Erick, of Leicester, was appointed to the stewardship of the King's Inns, Dublin, partly in consideration of the

[1] *Deane Swift*, p. 15.

loyalty and suffering of his family. Some fifteen months later, in April, 1667, he died, leaving his widow with an infant daughter, and seven months after her husband's death, November 30, 1667, she gave birth to Jonathan, the younger, at 7, Hoey's Court, Dublin.

The Dean "hath often been heard to say" (I quote his fragment of autobiography) "that he felt the consequences of that (his parents') marriage, not only through the whole course of his education, but during the greater part of his life." This quaint assumption that a man's parentage is a kind of removable accident to which may be attributed a limited part of his subsequent career, betrays a characteristic sentiment. Swift cherished a vague resentment against the fates which had mixed bitter ingredients in his lot. He felt the place as well as the circumstances of his birth to be a grievance. It gave a plausibility to the offensive imputation that he was of Irish blood. "I happened," he said, with a bitterness born of later sufferings, "by a perfect accident to be born here, and thus I am a Teague, or an Irishman, or what people please." Elsewhere he claims England as properly his own country; "although I happened to be dropped here, and was a year old before I left it (Ireland), and to my sorrow did not die before I came back to it." His infancy brought fresh grievances. He was, it seems, a precocious and delicate child, and his nurse became so much attached to him, that having to return to her native Whitehaven, she kidnapped the year-old infant out of pure affection. When his mother knew her loss, she was afraid to hazard a return voyage until the child was stronger; and he thus remained nearly three years at Whitehaven, where the nurse took such care of his education, that he could read any chapter in the Bible before he was three years old. His return must

have been speedily followed by his mother's departure for her native Leicester. Her sole dependence, it seems, was an annuity of 20*l.* a year, which had been bought for her by her husband upon their marriage. Some of the Swift family seem also to have helped her; but for reasons not now discoverable, she found Leicester preferable to Dublin, even at the price of parting from the little Jonathan. Godwin took him off her hands and sent him to Kilkenny School at the age of six, and from that early period the child had to grow up as virtually an orphan. His mother through several years to come can have been little more than a name to him. Kilkenny School, called the "Eton of Ireland," enjoyed a high reputation. Two of Swift's most famous contemporaries were educated there. Congreve, two years his junior, was one of his schoolfellows, and a warm friendship remained when both had become famous. Fourteen years after Swift had left the school it was entered by George Berkeley, destined to win a fame of the purest and highest kind, and to come into a strange relationship to Swift. It would be vain to ask what credit may be claimed by Kilkenny School for thus "producing" (it is the word used on such occasions) the greatest satirist, the most brilliant writer of comedies, and the subtlest metaphysician in the English language. Our knowledge of Swift's experiences at this period is almost confined to a single anecdote. "I remember," he says incidentally in a letter to Lord Bolingbroke, "when I was a little boy, I felt a great fish at the end of my line, which I drew up almost on the ground; but it dropped in, and the disappointment vexes me to this very day, and I believe it was the type of all my future disappointments."[2]

[2] Readers may remember a clever adaptation of this incident in Lord Lytton's *My Novel*.

Swift, indeed, was still in the schoolboy stage, according to modern ideas, when he was entered at Trinity College, Dublin, on the same day, April 24, 1682, with a cousin, Thomas Swift Swift clearly found Dublin uncongenial; though there is still a wide margin for uncertainty as to precise facts. His own account gives a short summary of his academic history:—

"By the ill-treatment of his nearest relations" (he says) "he was so discouraged and sunk in his spirits that he too much neglected his academic studies, for some parts of which he had no great relish by nature, and turned himself to reading history and poetry, so that when the time came for taking his degree of Bachelor of Arts, although he had lived with great regularity and due observance of the statutes, he was stopped of his degree for dulness and insufficiency; and at last hardly admitted in a manner little to his credit, which is called in that college *speciali gratia*." In a report of one of the college examinations, discovered by Mr. Forster, he receives a *bene* for his Greek and Latin, a *male* for his "philosophy," and a *negligenter* for his theology. The "philosophy" was still based upon the old scholasticism, and proficiency was tested by skill in the arts of syllogistic argumentation. Sheridan, son of Swift's intimate friend, was a student at Dublin shortly before the Dean's loss of intellectual power; the old gentleman would naturally talk to the lad about his university recollections; and, according to his hearer, remembered with singular accuracy the questions upon which he had disputed, and repeated the arguments which had been used, "in syllogistic form." Swift at the same time declared, if the report be accurate, that he never had the patience to read the pages of Smiglecius, Burgersdicius, and the other old-fashioned logi-

cal treatises. When told that they taught the art of reasoning, he declared that he could reason very well without it. He acted upon this principle in his exercises, and left the Proctor to reduce his argument to the proper form. In this there is probably a substratum of truth. Swift can hardly be credited, as Berkeley might have been, with a precocious perception of the weakness of the accepted system. When young gentlemen are plucked for their degree, it is not generally because they are in advance of their age. But the aversion to metaphysics was characteristic of Swift through life. Like many other people who have no turn for such speculations, he felt for them a contempt which may perhaps be not the less justified because it does not arise from familiarity. The bent of his mind was already sufficiently marked to make him revolt against the kind of mental food which was most in favour at Dublin; though he seems to have obtained a fair knowledge of the classics.

Swift cherished through life a resentment against most of his relations. His uncle Godwin had undertaken his education, and had sent him, as we see, to the best places of education in Ireland. If the supplies became scanty, it must be admitted that poor Godwin had a sufficient excuse. Each of his four wives had brought him a family—the last leaving him seven sons; his fortunes had been dissipated, chiefly, it seems, by means of a speculation in iron-works; and the poor man himself seems to have been failing, for he "fell into a lethargy" in 1688, surviving some five years, like his famous nephew, in a state of imbecility. Decay of mind and fortune coinciding with the demands of a rising family might certainly be some apology for the neglect of one amongst many nephews. Swift did not consider it sufficient. "Was it not your uncle Godwin," he was asked

"who educated you?" "Yes," said Swift, after a pause; "he gave me the education of a dog." "Then," answered the intrepid inquirer, "you have not the gratitude of a dog." And perhaps that is our natural impression. Yet we do not know enough of the facts to judge with confidence. Swift, whatever his faults, was always a warm and faithful friend; and perhaps it is the most probable conjecture that Godwin Swift bestowed his charity coldly and in such a way as to hurt the pride of the recipient. In any case, it appears that Swift showed his resentment in a manner more natural than reasonable. The child is tempted to revenge himself by knocking his head against the rock which has broken his shins; and with equal wisdom the youth who fancies that the world is not his friend, tries to get satisfaction by defying its laws. Till the time of his degree (February, 1686), Swift had been at least regular in his conduct, and if the neglect of his relations had discouraged his industry, it had not provoked him to rebellion. During the three years which followed he became more reckless. He was still a mere lad, just eighteen at the time of his degree, when he fell into more or less irregular courses. In rather less than two years he was under censure for seventy weeks. The offences consisted chiefly in neglect to attend chapel and in "town-haunting" or absence from the nightly roll-call. Such offences perhaps appear to be more flagrant than they really are in the eyes of college authorities. Twice he got into more serious scrapes. He was censured (March 16, 1687) along with his cousin, Thomas Swift, and several others for "notorious neglect of duties and frequenting 'the town.'" And on his twenty-first birthday (Nov. 30, 1688) he[3] was punished, along with several others, for

[3] Possibly this was his cousin Thomas, but the probabilities are clearly in favour of Jonathan.

exciting domestic dissensions, despising the warnings of the junior dean, and insulting that official by contemptuous words. The offenders were suspended from their degrees, and inasmuch as Swift and another were the worst offenders (*adhuc intolerabilius se gesserant*), they were sentenced to ask pardon of the dean upon their knees publicly in the hall. Twenty years later[4] Swift revenged himself upon Owen Lloyd, the junior dean, by accusing him of infamous servility. For the present Swift was probably reckoned amongst the black sheep of the academic flock.[5]

This censure came at the end of Swift's university career. The three last years had doubtless been years of discouragement and recklessness. That they were also years of vice in the usual sense of the word is not proved; nor, from all that we know of Swift's later history, does it seem to be probable. There is no trace of anything like licentious behaviour in his whole career. It is easier to believe with Scott that Swift's conduct at this period might be fairly described in the words of Johnson when speaking of his own university experience: "Ah, sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness that they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority." Swift learnt another and a more profitable lesson in these years. It is indicated in

[4] In the *Short Character of Thomas, Earl of Wharton.*

[5] It will be seen that I accept Dr. Barrett's statements, *Earlier Part of the Life of Swift*, pp. 13, 14. His arguments seem to me sufficiently clear and conclusive, and they are accepted by Monck Mason, though treated contemptuously by Mr. Forster, p. 34. On the other hand, I agree with Mr. Forster that Swift's complicity in the *Terræ Filius* oration is not proved, though it is not altogether improbable.

an anecdote which rests upon tolerable authority. One day, as he was gazing in melancholy mood from his window, his pockets at their lowest ebb, he saw a sailor staring about in the college courts. How happy should I be, he thought, if that man was inquiring for me with a present from my cousin Willoughby! The dream came true. The sailor came to his rooms and produced a leather bag, sent by his cousin from Lisbon, with more money than poor Jonathan had ever possessed in his life. The sailor refused to take a part of it for his trouble, and Jonathan hastily crammed the money into his pocket, lest the man should repent of his generosity. From that time forward, he added, he became a better economist.

The Willoughby Swift here mentioned was the eldest son of Godwin, and now settled in the English factory at Lisbon. Swift speaks warmly of his "goodness and generosity" in a letter written to another cousin in 1694. Some help, too, was given by his uncle William, who was settled at Dublin, and whom he calls the "best of his relations." In one way or another he was able to keep his head above water; and he was receiving an impression which grew with his growth. The misery of dependence was burnt into his soul. To secure independence became his most cherished wish; and the first condition of independence was a rigid practice of economy. We shall see hereafter how deeply this principle became rooted in his mind; here I need only notice that it is the lesson which poverty teaches to none but men of strong character.

A catastrophe meanwhile was approaching, which involved the fortunes of Swift along with those of nations. James II. had been on the throne for a year when Swift took his degree. At the time when Swift was ordered to kneel to the junior dean, William was in England, and

James preparing to fly from Whitehall. The revolution of 1688 meant a breaking up of the very foundations of political and social order in Ireland. At the end of 1688 a stream of fugitives was pouring into England, whilst the English in Ireland were gathering into strong places, abandoning their property to the bands of insurgent peasants.

Swift fled with his fellows. Any prospects which he may have had in Ireland were ruined with the ruin of his race. The loyalty of his grandfather to a king who protected the national church was no precedent for loyalty to a king who was its deadliest enemy. Swift, a Churchman to the backbone, never shared the leaning of many Anglicans to the exiled Stuarts; and his early experience was a pretty strong dissuasive from Jacobitism. He took refuge with his mother at Leicester. Of that mother we hear less than we could wish; for all that we hear suggests a brisk, wholesome, motherly body. She lived cheerfully and frugally on her pittance; rose early, worked with her needle, read her book, and deemed herself to be "rich and happy"—on twenty pounds a year. A touch of her son's humour appears in the only anecdote about her. She came, it seems, to visit her son in Ireland shortly after he had taken possession of Laracor, and amused herself by persuading the woman with whom she lodged that Jonathan was not her son but her lover. Her son, though separated from her through the years in which filial affection is generally nourished, loved her with the whole strength of his nature; he wrote to her frequently, took pains to pay her visits "rarely less than once a year;" and was deeply affected by her death in 1710. "I have now lost," he wrote in his pocket-book, "the last barrier between me and death. God

grant I may be as well prepared for it as I confidently believe her to have been! If the way to Heaven be through piety, truth, justice, and charity, she is there."

The good lady had, it would seem, some little anxieties of the common kind about her son. She thought him in danger of falling in love with a certain Betty Jones, who, however, escaped the perils of being wife to a man of genius, and married an innkeeper. Some forty years later, Betty Jones, now Perkins, appealed to Swift to help her in some family difficulties, and Swift was ready to "sacrifice five pounds" for old acquaintance' sake. Other vague reports of Swift's attentions to women seem to have been flying about in Leicester. Swift, in noticing them, tells his correspondent that he values "his own entertainment beyond the obloquy of a parcel of wretched fools," which he "solemnly pronounces" to be a fit description of the inhabitants of Leicester. He had, he admits, amused himself with flirtation; but he has learnt enough, "without going half a mile beyond the University," to refrain from thoughts of matrimony. A "cold temper" and the absence of any settled outlook are sufficient dissuasives. Another phrase in the same letter is characteristic. "A person of great honour in Ireland (who was pleased to stoop so low as to look into my mind) used to tell me that my mind was like a conjured spirit that would do mischief if I did not give it employment." He allowed himself these little liberties, he seems to infer, by way of distraction for his restless nature. But some more serious work was necessary, if he was to win the independence so earnestly desired, and to cease to be a burden upon his mother. Where was he to look for help?

CHAPTER II.

MOOR PARK AND KILROOT.

How was this "conjured spirit" to find occupation? The proverbial occupation of such beings is to cultivate despair by weaving ropes of sand. Swift felt himself strong; but he had no task worthy of his strength: nor did he yet know precisely where it lay: he even fancied that it might be in the direction of Pindaric Odes. Hitherto his energy had expended itself in the questionable shape of revolt against constituted authority. But the revolt, whatever its precise nature, had issued in the rooted determination to achieve a genuine independence. The political storm which had for the time crushed the whole social order of Ireland into mere chaotic anarchy, had left him an uprooted waif and stray—a loose fragment without any points of attachment, except the little household in Leicester. His mother might give him temporary shelter, but no permanent home. If, as is probable, he already looked forward to a clerical career, the Church to which he belonged was, for the time, hopelessly ruined, and in danger of being a persecuted sect.

In this crisis a refuge was offered to him. Sir William Temple was connected, in more ways than one, with the Swifts. He was the son of Sir John Temple, Master of the Rolls in Ireland, who had been a friend of Godwin

Swift. Temple himself had lived in Ireland, in early days, and had known the Swift family. His wife was in some way related to Swift's mother; and he was now in a position to help the young man. Temple is a remarkable figure amongst the statesmen of that generation. There is something more modern about him than belongs to his century. A man of cultivated taste and cosmopolitan training, he had the contempt of enlightened persons for the fanaticisms of his times. He was not the man to suffer persecution, with Baxter, for a creed, or even to lose his head, with Russell, for a party. Yet if he had not the faith which animates enthusiasts, he sincerely held political theories—a fact sufficient to raise him above the thorough-going cynics of the court of the restoration. His sense of honour, or the want of robustness in mind and temperament, kept him aloof from the desperate game in which the politicians of the day staked their lives, and threw away their consciences as an incumbrance. Good fortune threw him into the comparatively safe line of diplomacy, for which his natural abilities fitted him. Good fortune, aided by discernment, enabled him to identify himself with the most respectable achievements of our foreign policy. He had become famous as the chief author of the Triple Alliance, and the promoter of the marriage of William and Mary. He had ventured far enough into the more troublous element of domestic politics to invent a highly applauded constitutional device for smoothing the relations between the crown and Parliament. Like other such devices it went to pieces at the first contact with realities. Temple retired to cultivate his garden and write elegant memoirs and essays, and refused all entreaties to join again in the rough struggles of the day. Associates, made of sterner stuff, probably

despised him; but from their own, that is, the selfish point of view, he was perhaps entitled to laugh last. He escaped at least with unblemished honour, and enjoyed the cultivated retirement which statesmen so often profess to desire, and so seldom achieve. In private, he had many estimable qualities. He was frank and sensitive; he had won diplomatic triumphs by disregarding the pedantry of official rules; and he had an equal, though not an equally intelligent, contempt for the pedantry of the schools. His style, though often slipshod, often anticipates the pure and simple English of the Addison period, and delighted Charles Lamb by its delicate flavour of aristocratic assumption. He had the vanity of a "person of quality,"—a lofty, dignified air which became his flowing periwig, and showed itself in his distinguished features. But in youth, a strong vein of romance displayed itself in his courtship of Lady Temple, and he seems to have been correspondingly worshipped by her, and his sister, Lady Giffard.

The personal friendship of William could not induce Temple to return to public life. His only son took office, but soon afterwards killed himself from a morbid sense of responsibility. Temple retired finally to Moor Park, near Farnham, in Surrey; and about the same time received Swift into his family. Long afterwards, John Temple, Sir William's nephew, who had quarrelled with Swift, gave an obviously spiteful account of the terms of this engagement. Swift, he said, was hired by Sir William to read to him and be his amanuensis, at the rate of 20*l.* a year and his board; but "Sir William never favoured him with his conversation, nor allowed him to sit down at table with him." The authority is bad, and we must be guided by rather precarious inferences in picturing

this important period of Swift's career. The raw Irish student was probably awkward, and may have been disagreeable in some matters. Forty years later, we find from his correspondence with Gay and the Duchess of Queensberry, that his views as to the distribution of functions between knives and forks were lamentably unsettled; and it is probable that he may in his youth have been still more heretical as to social conventions. There were more serious difficulties. The difference which separated Swift from Temple is not easily measurable. How can we exaggerate the distance at which a lad, fresh from college and a remote provincial society, would look up to the distinguished diplomatist of sixty, who had been intimate with the two last kings, and was still the confidential friend of the reigning king, who had been an actor in the greatest scenes, not only of English, but of European history, who had been treated with respect by the ministers of Louis XIV., and in whose honour bells had been rung, and banquets set forth as he passed through the great continental cities? Temple might have spoken to him, without shocking proprieties, in terms which, if I may quote the proverbial phrase, would be offensive "from God Almighty to a blackbeetle."

> Shall I believe a spirit so divine
> Was cast in the same mould with mine?

is Swift's phrase about Temple, in one of his first crude poems. We must not infer that circumstances which would now be offensive to an educated man—the seat at the second table, the predestined congeniality to the ladies'-maid of doubtful reputation—would have been equally offensive then. So long as dependence upon patrons was a regular incident of the career of a poor

[redacted] corresponding regulations would be taken as a matter of course. Swift was not necessarily more degraded by being a dependent of Temple's than Locke by a similar position in Shaftesbury's family. But it is true that such a position must always be trying, as many a gentleman has felt in more modern days. The position of the educated dependent must always have had its special annoyances. At this period, when the relation of patron and client was being rapidly modified or lost, the contact would be more than usually trying to the power of forbearance and mutual kindliness of the parties concerned. The relation between Sir Roger de Coverley and the old college friend who became his chaplain must good feeling on both sides. When poor parson Supple became chaplain to Squire Western, and was sent back from London to Basingstoke in search of a specific, Supple must have parted with all self-respect. Swift has incidentally given his own view of the case in his *Essay on the Fates of Clergymen*. It is an application of one of his favourite doctrines—the advantage possessed by mediocrity over genius in a world so largely composed of fools. Eugenio, who represents Jonathan Swift, fails in life because as a wit and a poet he has not the art of winning patronage. Corinides, in whom we have a partial likeness to Tom Swift, Jonathan's college contemporary, and afterwards the chaplain of Temple, succeeds by servile respectability. *He* never neglected chapel, or lectures: *he* never looked into a poem: never made a jest himself, or laughed at the jests of others: but he managed to insinuate himself into the favour of the noble family where his sister was a waiting-woman; shook hands with the butler, taught the page his catechism: was sometimes admitted to dine

at the steward's table; was admitted to read prayers, at ten shillings a month: and, by winking at his patron's attentions to his sister, gradually crept into better appointments, married a citizen's widow, and is now fast mounting towards the top of the ladder ecclesiastical.

Temple was not the man to demand or reward services so base as those attributed to Corusodes. Nor does it seem that he would be wanting in the self-respect which prescribes due courtesy to inferiors, though it admits of a strict regard for the ceremonial outworks of social dignity. He would probably neither permit others to take liberties nor take them himself. If Swift's self-esteem suffered, it would not be that he objected to offering up the conventional incense, but that he might possibly think that, after all, the idol was made of rather inferior clay. Temple, whatever his solid merits, was one of the showiest statesmen of the time; but there was no man living with a keener eye for realities and a more piercing insight into shams of all kinds than his raw secretary from Ireland. In later life Swift frequently expressed his scorn for the mysteries and the "refinements" (to use his favourite phrase) by which the great men of the world conceal the low passions and small wisdom actually exerted in affairs of State. At times he felt that Temple was not merely claiming the outward show of respect, but setting too high a value upon his real merits. So when Swift was at the full flood of fortune, when prime ministers and secretaries of state were calling him Jonathan, or listening submissively to his lectures on "whipping-day," he reverts to his early experience. "I often think," he says, when speaking of his own familiarity with St. John, "what a splutter Sir William Temple makes about being secretary of state." And this is a less respectful version of a sentiment expressed a

year before, "I am thinking what a veneration we had for Sir W. Temple because he might have been secretary of state at fifty, and here is a young fellow hardly thirty in that employment." In the interval there is another characteristic outburst. "I asked Mr. Secretary (St. John) what the devil ailed him on Sunday," and warned him "that I would never be treated like a schoolboy; that I had felt too much of that in my life already (meaning Sir W. Temple); that I expected every great minister who honoured me with his acquaintance, if he heard and saw anything to my disadvantage, would let me know in plain words, and not put me in pain to guess by the change or coldness of his countenance and behaviour." The day after this effusion, he maintains that he was right in what he said. "Don't you remember how I used to be in pain when Sir W. Temple would look cold and out of humour for three or four days, and I used to suspect a hundred reasons? I have plucked up my spirits since then; faith, he spoiled a fine gentleman." And yet, if Swift sometimes thought Temple's authority oppressive, he was ready to admit his substantial merits. Temple, he says, in his rough marginalia to Burnet's *History*, "was a man of sense and virtue;" and the impromptu utterance probably reflects his real feeling.

The year after his first arrival at Temple's, Swift went back to Ireland by advice of physicians, who "weakly imagined that his native air might be of some use to recover his health." It was at this period, we may note in passing, that Swift began to suffer from a disease which tormented him through life. Temple sent with him a letter of introduction to Sir Robert Southwell, Secretary of State in Ireland, which gives an interesting account of their previous relations. Swift, said Temple, had lived in his

house, read for him, written for him, and kept his small accounts. He knew Latin and Greek, and a little French; wrote a good hand, and was honest and diligent. His whole family had long been known to Temple, who would be glad if Southwell would give him a clerkship, or get him a fellowship in Trinity College. The statement of Swift's qualifications has now a rather comic sound. An applicant for a desk in a merchant's office once commended himself, it is said, by the statement that his style of writing combined scathing sarcasm with the wildest flights of humour. Swift might have had a better claim to a place for which such qualities were a recommendation; but there is no reason beyond the supposed agreement of fools to regard genius as a disadvantage in practical life, to suppose that Swift was deficient in humbler attainments. Before long, however, he was back at Moor Park; and a period followed in which his discontent with the position probably reached its height. Temple, indeed, must have discovered that his young dependent was really a man of capacity. He recommended him to William. In 1692 Swift went to Oxford, to be admitted *ad eundem*, and received the M.A. degree; and Swift, writing to thank his uncle for obtaining the necessary testimonials from Dublin, adds that he has been most civilly received at Oxford, on the strength, presumably, of Temple's recommendation, and that he is not to take orders till the king gives him a prebend. He suspects Temple, however, of being rather backward in the matter, "because (I suppose) he believes I shall leave him, and (upon some accounts) he thinks me a little necessary to him." William, it is said, was so far gracious as to offer to make Swift a captain of horse, and instruct him in the Dutch mode of cutting asparagus. By this last phrase hangs an

anecdote of later days. Faulkner, the Dublin printer, was dining with Swift, and on asking for a second supply of asparagus, was told by the Dean to finish what he had on his plate. "What, sir, eat my stalks?" "Ay, sir; King William always ate his stalks." "And were you," asked Faulkner's hearer when he related the story, "were you blockhead enough to obey him?" "Yes," replied Faulkner, "and if you had dined with Dean Swift *tête-à-tête* you would have been obliged to eat your stalks too!" For the present Swift was the recipient not the imposer of stalks; and was to receive the first shock, as he tells us, that helped to cure him of his vanity. The question of the Triennial Bill was agitating political personages in the early months of 1693. William and his favourite minister, the Earl of Portland, found their Dutch experience insufficient to guide them in the mysteries of English constitutionalism. Portland came down to consult Temple at Moor Park; and Swift was sent back to explain to the great men that Charles I. had been ruined not by consenting to short Parliaments, but by abandoning the right to dissolve Parliament. Swift says that he was "well versed in English history, though he was under twenty-one years old." (He was really twenty-five, but memory naturally exaggerated his youthfulness). His arguments, however backed by history, failed to carry conviction, and Swift had to unlearn some of the youthful confidence which assumes that reason is the governing force in this world, and that reason means our own opinions. That so young a man should have been employed on such an errand shows that Temple must have had a good opinion of his capacities; but his want of success, however natural, was felt as a grave discouragement.

That his discontent was growing is clear from other

indications. Swift's early poems, whatever their defects, have one merit common to all his writings—the merit of a thorough, sometimes an appalling, sincerity. Two poems which begin to display his real vigour are dated at the end of 1693. One is an epistle to his schoolfellow, Congreve, expatiating, as some consolation for the cold reception of the *Double Dealer*, upon the contemptible nature of town critics. Swift describes, as a type of the whole race, a Farnham lad who had left school a year before, and had just returned a "finished spark" from London.

> Stock'd with the latest gibberish of the town.

This wretched little fop came in an evil hour to provoke Swift's hate,—

> My hate, whose lash just heaven has long decreed
> Shall on a day make sin and folly bleed.

And he already applies it with vigour enough to show that with some of the satirist's power he has also the indispensable condition of a considerable accumulation of indignant wrath against the self-appointed arbiters of taste. The other poem is more remarkable in its personal revelation. It begins as a congratulation to Temple on his recovery from an illness. It passes into a description of his own fate, marked by singular bitterness. He addresses his muse as—

> Malignant Goddess! bane to my repose,
> Thou universal cause of all my woes.

She is, it seems, a mere delusive meteor, with no real being of her own. But, if real, why does she persecute him?

Wert thou right woman, thou should'st scorn to look
On an abandon'd wretch by hopes forsook:
Forsook by hopes, ill fortune's last relief,
Assign'd for life to unremitting grief;
For let heaven's wrath enlarge these weary days
If hope e'er dawns the smallest of its rays.

And he goes on to declare after some vigorous lines,

To thee I owe that fatal bent of mind,
Still to unhappy restless thoughts inclined:
To thee what oft I vainly strive to hide,
That scorn of fools, by fools mistook for pride;
From thee whatever virtue takes its rise,
Grows a misfortune, or becomes a vice.

The sudden gush as of bitter waters into the dulcet, insipid current of conventional congratulation, gives additional point to the sentiment. Swift expands the last couplet into a sentiment which remained with him through life. It is a blending of pride and remorse; a regretful admission of the loftiness of spirit which has caused his misfortunes; and we are puzzled to say whether the pride or the remorse be the most genuine. For Swift always unites pride and remorse in his consciousness of his own virtues.

The "restlessness" avowed in these verses took the practical form of a rupture with Temple. In his autobiographical fragment he says that he had a scruple of entering into the church merely for support, and Sir William, then being Master of the Rolls in Ireland,[1] offered him an employ of about 120*l.* a year in that office; whereupon Mr. Swift told him that since he had now an opportunity of living without being driven into

[1] Temple had the reversion of his father's office.

the church for a maintenance, he was resolved to go to Ireland and take holy orders. If the scruple seems rather finely spun for Swift, the sense of the dignity of his profession is thoroughly characteristic. Nothing, however, is more deceptive than our memory of the motives which directed distant actions. In his contemporary letters there is no hint of any scruple against preferment in the church, but a decided objection to insufficient preferment. It is possible that Swift was confusing dates, and that the scruple was quieted when he failed to take advantage of Temple's interest with Southwell. Having declined, he felt that he had made a free choice of a clerical career. In 1692, as we have seen, he expected a prebend from Temple's influence with William. But his doubts of Temple's desire or power to serve him were confirmed. In June, 1694, he tells a cousin at Lisbon, "I have left Sir W. Temple a month ago, just as I foretold it you; and everything happened exactly as I guessed. He was extremely angry I left him; and yet would not oblige himself any further than upon my good behaviour, nor would promise anything firmly to me at all; so that everybody judged I did best to leave him." He is starting in four days for Dublin, and intends to be ordained in September. The next letter preserved completes the story, and implies a painful change in this cavalier tone of injured pride. Upon going to Dublin, Swift had found that some recommendation from Temple would be required by the authorities. He tried to evade the requirement, but was forced at last to write a letter to Temple, which nothing but necessity could have extorted. After explaining the case, he adds, "the particulars expected of me are what relates to morals and learning, and the reasons of quitting your honour's family, that is whether

the last was occasioned by any ill actions. They are all left entirely to your honour's mercy, though in the past I think I cannot reproach myself any farther than for *infirmities*. This," he adds, "is all I dare beg at present from your honour, under circumstances of life not worth your regard;" and all that is left him to wish ("next to the health and prosperity of your honour's family") is that Heaven will show him some day the opportunity of making his acknowledgments at "your honour's" feet. This seems to be the only occasion on which we find Swift confessing to any fault except that of being too virtuous.

The apparent doubt of Temple's magnanimity implied in the letter was happily not verified. The testimonial seems to have been sent at once. Swift, in any case, was ordained deacon on the 28th of October, 1694, and priest on the 15th of January, 1695. Probably Swift felt that Temple had behaved with magnanimity, and in any case it was not very long before he returned to Moor Park. He had received from Lord Capel, then lord deputy, the small prebend of Kilroot, worth about 100*l.* a year. Little is known of his life as a remote country clergyman, except that he very soon became tired of it.[2] Swift soon resigned his prebend (in March, 1698) and managed to obtain the succession for a friend in the neighbourhood. But before this (in May, 1696) he had returned to Moor Park. He had grown weary of a life in a remote district, and Temple had raised his offers. He was glad to be once more on the edge at least of the great world in which alone could be found employment worthy of his talents.

[2] It may be noticed in illustration of the growth of the Swift legend, that two demonstrably false anecdotes—one imputing a monstrous crime, the other a romantic piece of benevolence to Swift—refer to this period.

One other incident, indeed, of which a fuller account would be interesting, is connected with this departure. On the eve of his departure, he wrote a passionate letter to "Varina," in plain English Miss Waring, sister of an old college chum. He "solemnly offers to forego all" (all his English prospects, that is) "for her sake." He does not want her fortune; she shall live where she pleases; till he has "pushed his advancement" and is in a position to marry her. The letter is full of true lovers' protestations; reproaches for her coldness; hints at possible causes of jealousies; declarations of the worthlessness of ambition as compared with love; and denunciations of her respect for the little disguises and affected contradictions of her sex, infinitely beneath persons of her pride and his own; paltry maxims calculated only for the "rabble of humanity." "By heaven, Varina," he exclaims, "you are more experienced, and have less virgin innocence than I." The answer must have been unsatisfactory; though from expressions in a letter to his successor to the prebend, we see that the affair was still going on in 1699. It will come to light once more.

Swift was thus at Moor Park in the summer of 1696. He remained till Temple's death in January, 1699. We hear no more of any friction between Swift and his patron; and it seems that the last years of their connexion passed in harmony. Temple was growing old; his wife, after forty years of a happy marriage, had died during Swift's absence in the beginning of 1695; and Temple, though he seems to have been vigorous, and in spite of gout a brisk walker, was approaching the grave. He occupied himself in preparing, with Swift's help, memoirs and letters, which were left to Swift for posthumous publication. Swift's various irritations at Moor Park

have naturally left a stronger impression upon his history than the quieter hours in which worry and anxiety might be forgotten in the placid occupations of a country life. That Swift enjoyed many such hours is tolerably clear. Moor Park is described by a Swiss traveller who visited it about 1691,[3] as the "model of an agreeable retreat." Temple's household was free from the coarse convivialities of the boozing fox-hunting squires; whilst the recollection of its modest neatness made the "magnificent palace" of Petworth seem pompous and overpowering. Swift himself remembered the Moor Park gardens, the special pride of Temple's retirement, with affection, and tried to imitate them on a small scale in his own garden at Laracor. Moor Park is on the edge of the great heaths which stretch southward to Hindhead, and northwards to Aldershot and Chobham Ridges. Though we can scarcely credit him with a modern taste in scenery, he at least anticipated the modern faith in athletic exercises. According to Deane Swift, he used to run up a hill near Temple's and back again to his study every two hours, doing the distance of half a mile in six minutes. In later life he preached the duty of walking with admirable perseverance to his friends. He joined other exercises occasionally. "My Lord," he says to Archbishop King in 1721, "I row after health like a waterman, and ride after it like a postboy, and with some little success." But he had the characteristic passion of the good and wise for walking. He mentions incidentally a walk from Farnham to London, thirty-eight miles; and has some association with the Golden Farmer[4] —a point on the road from which there is still one of the

[3] M. Maralt. See appendix to Courtenay's *Life of Temple*.

[4] The publichouse at the point thus named on the ordnance map is now (I regret to say) called the Jolly Farmer.

loveliest views in the southern counties, across undulating breadths of heath and meadow, woodland and down, to Windsor Forest, St. George's Hill, and the chalk range from Guildford to Epsom. Perhaps he might have been a mountaineer in more civilized times; his poem on the Carberry rocks seems to indicate a lover of such scenery; and he ventured so near the edge of the cliff upon his stomach, that his servants had to drag him back by his heels. We find him proposing to walk to Chester at the rate, I regret to say, of only ten miles a day. In such rambles, we are told, he used to put up at wayside inns, where "lodgings for a penny" were advertised; bribing the maid with a tester to give him clean sheets and a bed to himself. The love of the rough humour of waggoners and hostlers is supposed to have been his inducement to this practice; and the refined Orrery associates his coarseness with this lamentable practice; but amidst the roar of railways we may think more tolerantly of the humours of the road in the good old days, when each village had its humours and traditions and quaint legends, and when homely maxims of unlettered wisdom were to be picked up at rustic firesides.

Recreations of this kind were a relief to serious study. In Temple's library Swift found abundant occupation. "I am often," he says, in the first period of his residence, "two or three months without seeing anybody besides the family." In a later fragment, we find him living alone "in great state," the cook coming for his orders for dinner, and the revolutions in the kingdom of the rooks amusing his leisure. The results of his studies will be considered directly. A list of books read in 1697 gives some hint of their general nature. They are chiefly classical and historical. He read Virgil, Homer, Horace,

Lucretius, Cicero's *Epistles*, Petronius Arbiter, Ælian, Lucius Florus, Herbert's *Henry VIII.*, Sleidan's *Commentaries*, *Council of Trent*, Camden's *Elizabeth*, Burnet's *History of the Reformation*, Voiture, Blackmore's *Prince Arthur*, Sir J. Davis's poem of *The Soul*, and two or three travels, besides Cyprian and Irenæus. We may note the absence of any theological reading, except in the form of ecclesiastical history; nor does Swift study philosophy, of which he seems to have had a sufficient dose in Dublin. History seems always to have been his favourite study, and it would naturally have a large part in Temple's library.

One matter of no small importance to Swift remains to be mentioned. Temple's family included other dependents besides Swift. The "little parson cousin," Tom Swift, whom his great relation always mentions with contempt, became chaplain to Temple. Jonathan's sister was for some time at Moor Park. But the inmates of the family most interesting to us were a Rebecca Dingley—who was in some way related to the family—and Esther Johnson. Esther Johnson was the daughter of a merchant of respectable family who died young. Her mother was known to Lady Giffard, Temple's attached sister; and after her widowhood, went with her two daughters to live with the Temples. Mrs. Johnson lived as servant or companion to Lady Giffard for many years after Temple's death; and little Esther, a remarkably bright and pretty child, was brought up in the family, and received under Temple's will a sufficient legacy for her support. It was of course guessed by a charitable world that she was a natural child of Sir William's; but there seems to be no real ground for the hypothesis.[5] She was born, as Swift

[5] The most direct statement to this effect was made in an

tells us, on March 13th, 1681; and was therefore a little over eight when Swift first came to Temple, and fifteen when he returned from Kilroot.[6] About this age, he tells us, she got over an infantile delicacy, "grew into perfect health, and was looked upon as one of the most beautiful, graceful, and agreeable young women in London. Her hair was blacker than a raven, and every feature of her face in perfection." Her conduct and character were equally remarkable, if we may trust the tutor who taught her to write, guided her education, and came to regard her with an affection which was at once the happiness and the misery of his life.

Temple died January 26, 1699; and "with him," said Swift at the time, "all that was good and amiable among men." The feeling was doubtless sincere, though Swift, when moved very deeply, used less conventional phrases. He was thrown once more upon the world. The expectations of some settlement in life had not been realized. Temple had left him 100*l.*, the advantage of publishing his posthumous works, which might ultimately bring in 200*l.* more, and a promise of preferment from the king. Swift had lived long enough upon the "chameleon's food." His energies were still running to waste; and he suffered the misery of a weakness due, not to want of power but want of opportunity. His sister writes to a cousin that her brother had lost his best friend, who had induced him to give up his Irish preferment by promising prefer-

article in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1757. It professes to speak with authority, but includes such palpable blunders as to carry little weight.

[6] I am not certain whether this means 1681 or 1681-82. I have assumed the former date in mentioning Stella's age; but the other is equally possible.

ment in England, and had died before the promise had been fulfilled. Swift was accused of ingratitude by Lord Palmerston, Temple's nephew, some thirty-five years later. In reply, he acknowledged an obligation to Temple for the recommendation to William and the legacy of his papers; but he adds, "I hope you will not charge my living in his family as an obligation; for I was educated to little purpose if I retired to his house for any other motives than the benefit of his conversation and advice, and the opportunity of pursuing my studies. For, being born to no fortune, I was at his death as far to seek as ever; and perhaps you will allow that I was of some use to him." Swift seems here to assume that his motives for living with Temple are necessarily to be estimated by the results which he obtained. But if he expected more than he got, he does not suggest any want of goodwill. Temple had done his best; William's neglect and Temple's death had made goodwill fruitless. The two might cry quits; and Swift set to work, not exactly with a sense of injury, but probably with a strong feeling that a large portion of his life had been wasted. To Swift, indeed, misfortune and injury seem equally to have meant resentment, whether against the fates or some personal object.

One curious document must be noted before considering the writings which most fully reveal the state of Swift's mind. In the year 1699 he wrote down some resolutions, headed "when I come to be old." They are for the most part pithy and sensible, if it can ever be sensible to make resolutions for behaviour in a distant future. Swift resolves not to marry a young woman, not to keep young company unless they desire it, not to repeat stories, not to listen to knavish, tattling servants, not to be too free of advice, not to brag of former beauty and favour with ladies, to desire some good friends to inform him when he breaks

these resolutions and to reform accordingly; and finally, not to set up for observing all these rules for fear he should observe none. These resolutions are not very original in substance (few resolutions are), though they suggest some keen observation of his elders; but one is more remarkable. "Not to be fond of children, *or let them come near me hardly.*" The words in italics are blotted out by a later possessor of the paper, shocked doubtless at the harshness of the sentiment. "We do not fortify ourselves with resolutions against what we dislike," says a friendly commentator, "but against what we feel in our weakness we have reason to believe we are really too much inclined to." Yet it is strange that a man should regard the purest and kindliest of feelings as a weakness to which he is too much inclined. No man had stronger affections than Swift; no man suffered more agony when they were wounded; but in his agony he would commit what to most men would seem the treason of cursing the affections instead of simply lamenting the injury, or holding the affection itself to be its own sufficient reward. The intense personality of the man reveals itself alternately at selfishness and as "altruism." He grappled to his heart those whom he really loved "as with hoops of steel;" so firmly that they became a part of himself; and that he considered himself at liberty to regard his love of friends as he might regard a love of wine, as something to be regretted when it was too strong for his own happiness. The attraction was intense; but implied the absorption of the weaker nature into his own. His friendships were rather annexations than alliances. The strongest instance of this characteristic was in his relations to the charming girl, who must have been in his mind when he wrote this strange, and unconsciously prophetic, resolution.

CHAPTER III

EARLY WRITINGS.

Swift came to Temple's house as a raw student. He left it as the author of one of the most remarkable satires ever written. His first efforts had been unpromising enough. Certain *Pindaric Odes*, in which the youthful aspirant imitated the still popular model of Cowley, are even comically prosaic. The last of them, dated 1691, is addressed to a queer Athenian Society, promoted by a John Dunton, a speculative bookseller, whose *Life and Errors* is still worth a glance from the curious. The Athenian Society was the name of John Dunton himself, and two or three collaborators who professed in the *Athenian Mercury* to answer queries ranging over the whole field of human knowledge. Temple was one of their patrons, and Swift sent them a panegyrical ode, the merits of which are sufficiently summed up by Dryden's pithy criticism—"Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet." Swift disliked and abused Dryden ever afterwards, though he may have had better reasons for his enmity than the child's dislike to bitter medicine. Later poems, the *Epistle to Congreve* and that to Temple already quoted, show symptoms of growing power and a clearer self-recognition. In Swift's last residence with Temple, he proved unmistakably that he had learnt the secret often so slowly re-

vealed to great writers, the secret of his real strength. The *Tale of a Tub* was written about 1696; part of it appears to have been seen at Kilroot by his friend, Waring, Varina's brother; the *Battle of the Books* was written in 1697. It is a curious proof of Swift's indifference to a literary reputation that both works remained in manuscript till 1704. The "little parson cousin" Tom Swift, ventured some kind of claim to a share in the authorship of the *Tale of a Tub*. Swift treated this claim with the utmost contempt, but never explicitly claimed for himself the authorship of what some readers hold to be his most powerful work.

The *Battle of the Books*, to which we may first attend, sprang out of the famous controversy as to the relative merits of the ancients and moderns, which began in France with Perrault and Fontenelle; which had been set going in England by Sir W. Temple's essay upon ancient and modern learning (1692), and which incidentally led to the warfare between Bentley and Wotton on one side, and Boyle and his Oxford allies on the other. A full account of this celebrated discussion may be found in Professor Jebb's *Bentley;* and, as Swift only took the part of a light skirmisher, nothing more need be said of it in this place. One point alone is worth notice. The eagerness of the discussion is characteristic of a time at which the modern spirit was victoriously revolting against the ancient canons of taste and philosophy. At first sight, we might therefore expect the defenders of antiquity to be on the side of authority. In fact, however, the argument, as Swift takes it from Temple, is reversed. Temple's theory, so far as he had any consistent theory, is indicated in the statement that the moderns gathered "all their learning from books in the universities." Learning, he suggests,

may weaken invention; and people who trust to the charity of others will always be poor. Swift accepts and enforces this doctrine. The *Battle of the Books* is an expression of that contempt for pedants which he had learnt in Dublin, and which is expressed in the ode to the Athenian Society. Philosophy, he tells us in that precious production, "seems to have borrowed some ungrateful taste of doubts, impertinence, and niceties from every age through which it passed" (this, I may observe, is verse), and is now a "medley of all ages," "her face patched over with modern pedantry." The moral finds a more poetical embodiment in the famous apologue of the Bee and the Spider in the *Battle of the Books*. The bee had got itself entangled in the spider's web in the library, whilst the books were beginning to wrangle. The two have a sharp dispute, which is summed up by Æsop as arbitrator. The spider represents the moderns who spin their scholastic pedantry out of their own insides; whilst the bee, like the ancients, goes direct to nature. The moderns produce nothing but "wrangling and satire, much of a nature with the spider's poison, which however they pretend to spit wholly out of themselves is improved by the same arts, by feeding upon the insects and vermin of the age." We, the ancients, "profess to nothing of our own, beyond our wings and our voice: that is to say, our flights and our language. For the rest, whatever we have got has been by infinite labour and research, and ranging through every corner of nature; the difference is that, instead of dirt and poison, we have rather chosen to fill our hives with honey and wax, thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are Sweetness and Light."

The Homeric battle which follows is described with infinite spirit. Pallas is the patron of the ancients

whilst Momus undertakes the cause of the moderns, and appeals for help to the malignant deity Criticism, who is found in her den at the top of a snowy mountain, extended upon the spoils of numberless half-devoured volumes. By her, as she exclaims in the regulation soliloquy, children become wiser than their parents, beaux become politicians, and schoolboys judges of philosophy. She flies to her darling Wotton, gathering up her person into an octavo compass; her body grows white and arid and splits in pieces with dryness; a concoction of gall and soot is strewn in the shape of letters upon her person; and so she joins the moderns, "undistinguishable in shape and dress from the divine Bentley, Wotton's dearest friend." It is needless to follow the fortunes of the fight which follows; it is enough to observe that Virgil is encountered by his translator Dryden in a helmet "nine times too large for the head, which appeared situate far in the hinder part, even like the lady in the lobster, or like a mouse under a canopy of state, or like a shrivelled beau within the penthouse of a modern periwig, and the voice was suited to the visage, sounding weak and remote;" and that the book is concluded by an episode, in which Bentley and Wotton try a diversion and steal the armour of Phalaris and Æsop, but are met by Boyle, clad in a suit of armour given him by all the gods, who transfixes them on his spear like a brace of woodcocks on an iron skewer.

The raillery, if taken in its critical aspect, recoils upon the author. Dryden hardly deserves the scorn of Virgil; and Bentley, as we know, made short work of Phalaris and Boyle. But Swift probably knew and cared little for the merits of the controversy. He expresses his contempt with characteristic vigour and coarseness; and our pleasure

in his display of exuberant satirical power is not injured by his obvious misconception of the merits of the case. The unflagging spirit of the writing, the fertility and ingenuity of the illustrations, do as much as can be done to give lasting vitality to what is radically (to my taste at least) a rather dreary form of wit. The *Battle of the Books* is the best of the travesties. Nor in the brilliant assault upon great names do we at present see anything more than the buoyant consciousness of power, common in the unsparing judgments of youth, nor edged as yet by any real bitterness. Swift has found out that the world is full of humbugs; and goes forth hewing and hacking with superabundant energy, not yet aware that he too may conceivably be a fallible being, and still less that the humbugs may some day prove too strong for him.

The same qualities are more conspicuous in the far greater satire the *Tale of a Tub*. It is so striking a performance that Johnson, who cherished one of his stubborn prejudices against Swift, doubted whether Swift could have written it. "There is in it," he said, "such a vigour of mind, such a swarm of thoughts, so much of nature, and art, and life." The doubt is clearly without the least foundation, and the estimate upon which it is based is generally disputed. The *Tale of a Tub* has certainly not achieved a reputation equal to that of *Gulliver's Travels*, to the merits of which Johnson was curiously blind. Yet I think that there is this much to be said in favour of Johnson's theory, namely, that Swift's style reaches its highest point in the earlier work. There is less flagging; a greater fulness and pressure of energetic thought; a power of hitting the nail on the head at the first blow, which has declined in the work of his maturer years, when life was weary and thought intermittent. Swift seems

to have felt this himself. In the twilight of his intellect, he was seen turning over the pages and murmuring to himself, "Good God, what a genius I had when I wrote that book!" In an apology (dated 1709) he makes a statement which may help to explain this fact. "The author," he says, "was then (1696) young, his invention at the height, and his reading fresh in his head. By the assistance of some thinking and much conversation, he had endeavoured to strip himself of as many prejudices as he could." He resolved, as he adds, "to proceed in a manner entirely new;" and he afterwards claims in the most positive terms that through the whole book (including both the tale and the battle of the books) he has not borrowed one "single hint from any writer in the world."[1] No writer has ever been more thoroughly original than Swift, for his writings are simply himself.

The *Tale of a Tub* is another challenge thrown down to pretentious pedantry. The vigorous, self-confident intellect has found out the emptiness and absurdity of a number of the solemn formulæ which pass current in the world, and tears them to pieces with audacious and rejoicing energy. He makes a mock of the paper chains with which solemn professors tried to fetter his activity, and scatters the fragments to the four winds of heaven.

[1] Wotton first accused Swift of borrowing the idea of the battle from a French book, by one Coutray, called *Histoire Poétique de la Guerre nouvellement déclarée entre les Anciens et Modernes*. Swift declared (I have no doubt truly) that he had never seen or heard of this book. But Coutray, like Swift, uses the scheme of a mock Homeric battle. The book is prose, but begins with a poem. The resemblance is much closer than Mr. Forster's language would imply; but I agree with him that it does not justify Johnson and Scott in regarding it as more than a natural coincidence. Every detail is different.

In one of the first sections he announces the philosophy afterwards expounded by Herr Teufelsdröckh, according to which "man himself is but a micro-coat;" if one of the suits of clothes called animals "be trimmed up with a gold chain, and a red gown, and a white rod, and a pert look, it is called a Lord Mayor; if certain ermines and furs be placed in a certain position, we style them a judge; and so an apt conjunction of lawn and black satin we entitle a bishop." Though Swift does not himself develop this philosophical doctrine, its later form reflects light upon the earlier theory. For, in truth, Swift's teaching comes to this, that the solemn plausibilities of the world are but so many "shams"—elaborate masks used to disguise the passions, for the most part base and earthly, by which mankind is really impelled. The "digressions" which he introduces with the privilege of a humorist, bear chiefly upon the literary sham. He falls foul of the whole population of Grub Street at starting, and (as I may note in passing) incidentally gives a curious hint of his authorship. He describes himself as a worn-out pamphleteer who has worn his quill to the pith in the service of the State. "Fourscore and eleven pamphlets have I writ under the reigns and for the service of six-and-thirty patrons." Porson first noticed that the same numbers are repeated in *Gulliver's Travels*; Gulliver is fastened with "fourscore and eleven chains" locked to his left leg "with six-and-thirty padlocks." Swift makes the usual onslaught of a young author upon the critics, with more than the usual vigour, and carries on the war against Bentley and his ally by parodying Wotton's remarks upon the ancients. He has discovered many omissions in Homer; "who seems to have read but very superficially either Sendivogus, Behmen, or *Anthroposophia*

Magia."[2] Homer, too, never mentions a saveall; and has a still worse fault—his "gross ignorance in the common laws of this realm, and in the doctrine as well as discipline of the Church of England"—defects, indeed, for which he has been justly censured by Wotton. Perhaps the most vigorous and certainly the most striking of these digressions, is that upon "the original use and improvement of madness in a commonwealth." Just in passing, as it were, Swift gives the pith of a whole system of misanthropy, though he as yet seems to be rather indulging a play of fancy, than expressing a settled conviction. Happiness, he says, is a "perpetual possession of being well deceived." The wisdom which keeps on the surface is better than that which persists in officiously prying into the underlying reality. "Last week I saw a woman flayed," he observes, "and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse." It is best to be content with patching up the outside, and so assuring the "serene, peaceful state"—the sublimest point of felicity —"of being a fool amongst knaves." He goes on to tell us how useful madmen may be made: how Curtius may be regarded equally as a madman and a hero for his leap into the gulf; how the raging, blaspheming, noisy inmate of Bedlam is fit to have a regiment of dragoons; and the bustling, sputtering, bawling madman should be sent to Westminster Hall; and the solemn madman, dreaming dreams and seeing best in the dark, to preside over a congregation of dissenters; and how elsewhere you

[2] This was a treatise by Thomas, twin brother of Henry Vaughan, the "Silurist." It led to a controversy with Henry More. Vaughan was a Rosicrucian. Swift's contempt for mysteries is characteristic. Sendivogus was a famous alchemist (1566—1646).

may find the raw material of the merchant, the courtier, or the monarch. We are all madmen, and happy so far as mad: delusion and peace of mind go together; and the more truth we know, the more shall we recognize that realities are hideous. Swift only plays with his paradoxes. He laughs without troubling himself to decide whether his irony tells against the theories which he ostensibly espouses, or those which he ostensibly attacks. But he has only to adopt in seriousness the fancy with which he is dallying, in order to graduate as a finished pessimist. These, however, are interruptions to the main thread of the book, which is a daring assault upon that serious kind of pedantry which utters itself in theological systems. The three brothers, Peter, Martin, and Jack, represent, as we all know, the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, and the Puritanical varieties of Christianity. They start with a new coat provided for each by their father, and a will to explain the right mode of wearing it; and after some years of faithful observance, they fall in love with the three ladies of wealth, ambition, and pride, get into terribly bad ways and make wild work of the coats and the will. They excuse themselves for wearing shoulder-knots by picking the separate letters S, H, and so forth, out of separate words in the will, and as K is wanting, discover it to be synonymous with C. They reconcile themselves to gold lace by remembering that when they were boys they heard a fellow say that he had heard their father's man say that he would advise his sons to get gold lace when they had money enough to buy it. Then, as the will becomes troublesome in spite of exegetical ingenuity, the eldest brother finds a convenient codicil which can be tacked to it, and will sanction a new fashion of flame-coloured satin. The will expressly forbids silver

fringe on the coats; but they discover that the word meaning silver fringe may also signify a broomstick. And by such devices they go on merrily for a time, till Peter sets up to be the sole heir and insists upon the obedience of his brethren. His performances in this position are trying to their temper. "Whenever it happened that any rogue of Newgate was condemned to be hanged, Peter would offer him a pardon for a certain sum of money; which when the poor caitiff had made all shifts to scrape up and send, his lordship would return a piece of paper in this form.

"'To all mayors, sheriffs, jailors, constables, bailiffs, hangmen, &c. Whereas we are informed that A. B. remains in the hands of you or some of you, under the sentence of death: We will and command you, upon sight hereof to let the said prisoner depart to his own habitation whether he stands condemned for murder, &c., &c., for which this shall be your sufficient warrant; and if you fail hereof, God damn you and yours to all eternity; and so we bid you heartily farewell. Your most humble man's man, Emperor Peter.'

"The wretches, trusting to this, lost their lives and their money too." Peter, however, became outrageously proud. He has been seen to take "three old high-crowned hats and clap them all on his head three-storey high, with a huge bunch of keys at his girdle, and an angling-rod in his hand. In which guise, whoever went to take him by the hand in the way of salutation, Peter, with much grace, like a well-educated spaniel, would present them with his foot; and if they refused his civility, then he would raise it as high as their chops, and give him a damned kick on the mouth, which has ever since been called a salute."

Peter receives his brothers at dinner, and has nothing served up but a brown loaf. Come, he says, "fall on and spare not; here is excellent good mutton," and he helps them each to a slice. The brothers remonstrate, and try to point out that they see only bread. They argue for some time, but have to give in to a conclusive argument. "'Look ye, gentlemen,' cries Peter in a rage, 'to convince you what a couple of blind, positive, ignorant, wilful puppies you are, I will use but this simple argument. By G— it is true, good, natural mutton as any in Leadenhall Market; and G— confound you both eternally, if you offer to believe otherwise.' Such a thundering proof as this left no further room for objection; the two unbelievers began to gather and pocket up their mistake as hastily as they could," and have to admit besides that another large dry crust is true juice of the grape.

The brothers Jack and Martin afterwards fall out: and Jack is treated to a storm of ridicule much in the same vein as that directed against Peter; and, if less pointed, certainly not less expressive of contempt. I need not further follow the details of what Johnson calls this "wild book," which is in every page brimful of intense satirical power. I must however say a few words upon a matter which is of great importance in forming a clear judgment of Swift's character. The *Tale of a Tub* was universally attributed to Swift, and led to many doubts of his orthodoxy and even of his Christianity. Sharpe, Archbishop of York, injured Swift's chances of preferment by insinuating such doubts to Queen Anne. Swift bitterly resented the imputation. He prefixed an apology to a later edition, in which he admitted that he had said some rash things; but declared that he would forfeit his life if any one opinion contrary to morality or religion could

be fairly deduced from the book. He pointed out that he had attacked no Anglican doctrine. His ridicule spares Martin, and is pointed at Peter and Jack. Like every satirist who ever wrote, he does not attack the use but the abuse; and as the Church of England represents for him the purest embodiment of the truth, an attack upon the abuses of religion meant an attack upon other churches only in so far as they diverged from this model. Critics have accepted this apology, and treated poor Queen Anne and her advisers as representing simply the prudery of the tea-table. The question, to my thinking, does not admit of quite so simple an answer.

If, in fact, we ask what is the true object of Swift's audacious satire, the answer will depend partly upon our own estimate of the truth. Clearly it ridicules "abuses;" but one man's use is another's abuse: and a dogma may appear to us venerable or absurd according to our own creed. One test, however, may be suggested, which may guide our decision. Imagine the *Tale of a Tub* to be read by Bishop Butler and by Voltaire, who called Swift a *Rabelais perfectionné*. Can any one doubt that the believer would be scandalized and the scoffer find himself in a thoroughly congenial element? Would not any believer shrink from the use of such weapons even though directed against his enemies? Scott urges that the satire was useful to the high church party because, as he says, it is important for any institution in Britain (or anywhere else, we may add) to have the laughers on its side. But Scott was too sagacious not to indicate the obvious reply. The condition of having the laughers on your side is to be on the side of the laughers. Advocates of any serious cause feel that there is a danger in accepting such an alliance. The laughers who join you in ridiculing your

enemy, are by no means pledged to refrain from laughing in turn at the laugher. When Swift had ridiculed all the Catholic and all the Puritan dogmas in the most unsparing fashion, could he be sure that the Thirty-nine Articles would escape scot free? The Catholic theory of a church possessing divine authority, the Puritan theory of a divine voice addressing the individual soul, suggested to him, in their concrete embodiments at least, nothing but a horselaugh. Could any one be sure that the Anglican embodiment of the same theories might not be turned to equal account by the scoffer? Was the true bearing of Swift's satire in fact limited to the deviations from sound Church of England doctrine, or might it not be directed against the very vital principle of the doctrine itself?

Swift's blindness to such criticisms was thoroughly characteristic. He professes, as we have seen, that he had need to clear his mind of *real* prejudices. He admits that the process might be pushed too far; that is, that in abandoning a prejudice you may be losing a principle. In fact, the prejudices from which Swift had sought to free himself —and no doubt with great success—were the prejudices of other people. For them he felt unlimited contempt. But the prejudice which had grown up in his mind, strengthened with his strength, and become intertwined with all his personal affections and antipathies, was no longer a prejudice in his eyes, but a sacred principle. The intensity of his contempt for the follies of others shut his eyes effectually to any similarity between their tenets and his own. His principles, true or false, were prejudices in the highest degree, if by a prejudice we mean an opinion cherished because it has somehow or other become ours, though the "somehow" may exclude all reference to

reason. Swift never troubled himself to assign any philosophical basis for his doctrines; having, indeed, a hearty contempt for philosophizing in general. He clung to the doctrines of his church, not because he could give abstract reasons for his belief, but simply because the church happened to be his. It is equally true of all his creeds, political or theological, that he loved them as he loved his friends, simply because they had become a part of himself, and were therefore identified with all his hopes, ambitions, and aspirations public or private. We shall see hereafter how fiercely he attacked the dissenters, and how scornfully he repudiated all arguments founded upon the desirability of union amongst Protestants. To a calm outside observer differences might appear to be superficial; but to him, no difference could be other than radical and profound which in fact divided him from an antagonist. In attacking the Presbyterians, cried more temperate people, you are attacking your brothers and your own opinions. No, replied Swift, I am attacking the corruption of my principles; hideous caricatures of myself; caricatures the more hateful in proportion to their apparent likeness. And therefore, whether in political or theological warfare, he was sublimely unconscious of the possible reaction of his arguments.

Swift took a characteristic mode of showing that if upon some points he accidentally agreed with the unbeliever, it was not from any covert sympathy. Two of his most vigorous pieces of satire in later days are directed against the deists. In 1708 he published an *Argument to prove that the abolishing of Christianity in England may, as things now stand, be attended with some inconveniences, and perhaps not produce those many good effects proposed thereby*. And in 1713, in the midst of his most eager

political warfare, he published *Mr. Collins's Discourse of Freethinking, put into plain English, by way of abstract, for use of the poor.* No one who reads these pamphlets can deny that the keenest satire may be directed against infidels as well as against Christians. The last is an admirable parody, in which poor Collins's arguments are turned against himself with ingenious and provoking irony. The first is perhaps Swift's cleverest application of the same method. A nominal religion, he urges gravely, is of some use, for if men cannot be allowed a God to revile or renounce, they will speak evil of dignities, and may even come to "reflect upon the ministry." If Christianity were once abolished, the wits would be deprived of their favourite topic. "Who would ever have suspected Asgil for a wit or Toland for a philosopher if the inexhaustible stock of Christianity had not been at hand to provide them with materials?" The abolition of Christianity moreover may possibly bring the Church into danger, for atheists, deists, and Socinians have little zeal for the present ecclesiastical establishment; and if they once get rid of Christianity, they may aim at setting up Presbyterianism. Moreover, as long as we keep to any religion, we do not strike at the root of the evil. The freethinkers consider that all the parts hold together, and that if you pull out one nail the whole fabric will fall. Which, he says, was happily expressed by one who heard that a text brought in proof of the Trinity, was differently read in some ancient manuscript; whereupon he suddenly leaped through a long *sorites* to the logical conclusion: "Why, if it be as you say, I may safely . . . . drink on and defy the parson."

A serious meaning underlies Swift's sarcasms. Collins had argued in defence of the greatest possible

freedom of discussion; and tacitly assumed that such discussion would lead to disbelief of Christianity. Opponents of the liberal school had answered by claiming his first principle as their own. They argued that religion was based upon reason, and would be strengthened instead of weakened by free inquiry. Swift virtually takes a different position. He objects to freethinking because ordinary minds are totally unfit for such inquiries. "The bulk of mankind," as he puts it, is as "well qualified for flying as thinking;" and therefore free-thought would lead to anarchy, atheism, and immorality, as liberty to fly would lead to a breaking of necks.

Collins rails at priests as tyrants upheld by imposture. Swift virtually replies that they are the sole guides to truth and guardians of morality, and that theology should be left to them, as medicine to physicians and law to lawyers. The argument against the abolition of Christianity takes the same ground. Religion, however little regard is paid to it in practice, is in fact the one great security for a decent degree of social order; and the rash fools who venture to reject what they do not understand, are public enemies as well as ignorant sciolists.

The same view is taken in Swift's sermons. He said of himself that he could only preach political pamphlets. Several of the twelve sermons preserved are in fact directly aimed at some of the political and social grievances which he was habitually denouncing. If not exactly "pamphlets," they are sermons in aid of pamphlets. Others are vigorous and sincere moral discourses. One alone deals with a purely theological topic: the doctrine of the Trinity. His view is simply that "men of wicked lives would be very glad if there were no truth in Christianity at all." They therefore cavil at the mysteries to find some

excuse for giving up the whole. He replies in effect that there must be mystery though not contradiction, everywhere, and that if we do not accept humbly what is taught in the Scriptures, we must give up Christianity, and consequently, as he holds, all moral obligation, at once. The cavil is merely the pretext of an evil conscience. Swift's religion thus partook of the directly practical nature of his whole character. He was absolutely indifferent to speculative philosophy. He was even more indifferent to the mystical or imaginative aspects of religion. He loved downright concrete realities, and was not the man to lose himself in an *Oh, altitudo!* or in any train of thought or emotion not directly bearing upon the actual business of the world. Though no man had more pride in his order or love of its privileges, Swift never emphasized his professional character. He wished to be accepted as a man of the world and of business. He despised the unpractical and visionary type, and the kind of religious utterance congenial to men of that type was abhorrent to him. He shrank invariably too from any display of his emotion, and would have felt the heartiest contempt for the sentimentalism of his day. At once the proudest and most sensitive of men, it was his imperative instinct to hide his emotions as much as possible. In cases of great excitement, he retired into some secluded corner, where, if he was forced to feel, he could be sure of hiding his feelings. He always masks his strongest passions under some ironical veil, and thus practised what his friends regarded as an inverted hypocrisy. Delany tells us that he stayed for six months in Swift's house, before discovering that the dean always read prayers to his servants at a fixed hour in private. A deep feeling of solemnity showed itself in his manner of performing public religious exercises,

but Delany, a man of a very different temperament, blames his friend for carrying his reserve in all such matters to extremes. In certain respects Swift was ostentatious enough; but this intense dislike to wearing his heart upon his sleeve, to laying bare the secrets of his affections before unsympathetic eyes, is one of his most indelible characteristics. Swift could never have felt the slightest sympathy for the kind of preacher who courts applause by a public exhibition of intimate joys and sorrows; and was less afraid of suppressing some genuine emotion than of showing any in the slightest degree unreal.

Although Swift took in the main what may be called the political view of religion, he did not by any means accept that view in its cynical form. He did not, that is, hold, in Gibbon's famous phrase, that all religions were equally false and equally useful. His religious instincts were as strong and genuine as they were markedly undemonstrative. He came to take (I am anticipating a little) a gloomy view of the world and of human nature. He had the most settled conviction not only of the misery of human life but of the feebleness of the good elements in the world. The bad and the stupid are the best fitted for life, as we find it. Virtue is generally a misfortune; the more we sympathize, the more cause we have for wretchedness; our affections give us the purest kind of happiness, and yet our affections expose us to sufferings which more than outweigh the enjoyments. There is no such thing, he said in his decline, as "a fine old gentleman;" if so and so had had either a mind or a body worth a farthing, "they would have worn him out long ago." That became a typical sentiment with Swift. His doctrine was, briefly, that: virtue was the one thing which

deserved love and admiration; and yet that virtue in this hideous chaos of a world, involved misery and decay. What would be the logical result of such a creed, I do not presume to say. Certainly, we should guess, something more pessimistic or Manichæan than suits the ordinary interpretation of Christian doctrine. But for Swift this state of mind carried with it the necessity of clinging to some religious creed: not because the creed held out promises of a better hereafter, for Swift was too much absorbed in the present to dwell much upon such beliefs; but rather because it provided him with some sort of fixed convictions in this strange and disastrous muddle. If it did not give a solution in terms intelligible to the human intellect, it encouraged the belief that some solution existed. It justified him to himself for continuing to respect morality, and for going on living, when all the game of life seemed to be decidedly going in favour of the devil, and suicide to be the most reasonable course. At least, it enabled him to associate himself with the causes and principles which he recognized as the most ennobling element in the world's "mad farce;" and to utter himself in formulæ consecrated by the use of such wise and good beings as had hitherto shown themselves amongst a wretched race. Placed in another situation, Swift no doubt might have put his creed—to speak after the Clothes Philosophy—into a different dress. The substance could not have been altered, unless his whole character as well as his particular opinions had been profoundly modified.

CHAPTER IV.

LARACOR AND LONDON.

Swift at the age of thirty-one had gained a small amount of cash, and a promise from William. He applied to the king, but the great man in whom he trusted failed to deliver his petition; and, after some delay, he accepted an invitation to become chaplain and secretary to the Earl of Berkeley, just made one of the Lords Justices of Ireland. He acted as secretary on the journey to Ireland: but upon reaching Dublin, Lord Berkeley gave the post to another man, who had persuaded him that it was unfit for a clergyman. Swift next claimed the deanery of Derry, which soon became vacant. The secretary had been bribed by 1000*l.* from another candidate, upon whom the deanery was bestowed: but Swift was told that he might still have the preference for an equal bribe. Unable or unwilling to comply, he took leave of Berkeley and the secretary, with the pithy remark, "God confound you both for a couple of scoundrels." He was partly pacified, however (February 1700), by the gift of Laracor, a village near Trim, some twenty miles from Dublin. Two other small livings, and a prebend in the cathedral of St. Patrick, made up a revenue of about 230*l.* a year.[1] The income enabled him to live; but, in spite of the

[1] See Forster, p. 117.

rigid economy which he always practised, did not enable him to save. Marriage under such circumstances would have meant the abandonment of an ambitious career. A wife and family would have anchored him to his country parsonage.

This may help to explain an unpleasant episode which followed. Poor Varina had resisted Swift's entreaties, on the ground of her own ill-health and Swift's want of fortune. She now, it seems, thought that the economical difficulty was removed by Swift's preferment, and wished the marriage to take place. Swift replied in a letter, which contains all our information: and to which I can apply no other epithet than brutal. Some men might feel bound to fulfil a marriage engagement, even when love had grown cold; others might think it better to break it off in the interests of both parties. Swift's plan was to offer to fulfil it on conditions so insulting that no one with a grain of self-respect could accept. In his letter he expresses resentment for Miss Waring's previous treatment of him; he reproaches her bitterly with the company in which she lives—including, as it seems, her mother; no young woman in the world with her income should "dwindle away her health in such a sink and among such family conversation." He explains that he is still poor; he doubts the improvement of her own health; and he then says that if she will submit to be educated so as to be capable of entertaining him: to accept all his likes and dislikes: to soothe his ill-humour, and live cheerfully wherever he pleases: he will take her without inquiring into her looks or her income. "Cleanliness in the first, and competency in the other, is all I look for." Swift could be the most persistent and ardent of friends. But, when any one tried to enforce

claims no longer congenial to his feelings, the appeal to the galling obligation stung him into ferocity, and brought out the most brutal side of his imperious nature.

It was in the course of the next year that Swift took a step which has sometimes been associated with this. The death of Temple had left Esther Johnson homeless. The small fortune left to her by Temple consisted of an Irish farm. Swift suggested to her that she and her friend Mrs. Dingley would get better interest for their money, and live more cheaply, in Ireland than in England. This change of abode naturally made people talk. The little parson cousin asked (in 1706) whether Jonathan had been able to resist the charms of the two ladies who had marched from Moor Park to Dublin "with full resolution to engage him." Swift was now (1701) in his thirty-fourth year, and Stella a singularly beautiful and attractive girl of twenty. The anomalous connexion was close, and yet most carefully guarded against scandal. In Swift's absence, the ladies occupied his apartments at Dublin. When he and they were in the same place they took separate lodgings. Twice, it seems, they accompanied him on visits to England. But Swift never saw Esther Johnson except in presence of a third person; and he incidentally declares in 1726—near the end of her life—that he had not seen her in a morning "these dozen years, except once or twice in a journey." The relations thus regulated remained unaltered for several years to come. Swift's duties at Laracor were not excessive. He reckons his congregation at fifteen persons, "most of them gentle and all simple." He gave notice, says Orrery, that he would read prayers every Wednesday and Friday. The congregation on the first Wednesday consisted of himself and his clerk, and Swift began the service, "Dearly beloved Roger, the scripture moveth you

and me," and so forth. This being attributed to Swift, is supposed to be an exquisite piece of facetiousness; but we may hope that, as Scott gives us reason to think, it was really one of the drifting jests that stuck for a time to the skirts of the famous humorist. What is certain is, that Swift did his best, with narrow means, to improve the living—rebuilt the house, laid out the garden, increased the glebe from one acre to twenty, and endowed the living with tithes bought by himself. He left the tithes on the remarkable condition (suggested probably by his fears of Presbyterian ascendancy) that, if another form of Christian religion should become the established faith in this kingdom, they should go to the poor—excluding Jews, Atheists, and infidels. Swift became attached to Laracor, and the gardens which he planted in humble imitation of Moor Park; he made friends of some of the neighbours; though he detested Trim, where "the people were as great rascals as the gentlemen;" but Laracor was rather an occasional retreat than a centre of his interests. During the following years Swift was often at the castle at Dublin, and passed considerable periods in London, leaving a curate in charge of the minute congregation at Laracor.

He kept upon friendly terms with successive Viceroys. He had, as we have seen, extorted a partial concession of his claims from Lord Berkeley. For Lord Berkeley, if we may argue from a very gross lampoon, he can have felt nothing but contempt. But he had a high respect for Lady Berkeley; and one of the daughters, afterwards Lady Betty Germaine, a very sensible and kindly woman, retained his friendship through life, and in letters written long afterwards refers with evident fondness to the old days of familiarity. He was intimate, again, with the family of the Duke of Ormond, who became Lord Lieutenant in

1703, and, again, was the close friend of one of the daughters. He was deeply grieved by her death a few years later, soon after her marriage to Lord Ashburnham. "I hate life," he says characteristically, "when I think it exposed to such accidents; and to see so many thousand wretches burdening the earth when such as her die, makes me think God did never intend life for a blessing." When Lord Pembroke succeeded Ormond, Swift still continued chaplain, and carried on a queer commerce of punning with Pembroke. It is the first indication of a habit which lasted, as we shall see, through life. One might be tempted to say, were it not for the conclusive evidence to the contrary, that this love of the most mechanical variety of facetiousness implied an absence of any true sense of humour. Swift, indeed, was giving proofs that he possessed a full share of that ambiguous talent. It would be difficult to find a more perfect performance of its kind than the poem by which he amused the Berkeley family in 1700. It is the *Petition of Mrs. Frances Harris*, a chambermaid, who had lost her purse, and whose peculiar style of language, as well as the unsympathetic comments of her various fellow-servants, are preserved with extraordinary felicity in a peculiar doggerel invented for the purpose by Swift. One fancies that the famous Mrs. Harris of Mrs. Gamp's reminiscences was a phantasmal descendant of Swift's heroine. He lays bare the workings of the menial intellect with the clearness of a master.

Neither Laracor nor Dublin could keep Swift from London.[2] During the ten years succeeding 1700, he must

[2] He was in England from April to September in 1701, from April to November in 1702, from November 1703 till May 1704, for an uncertain part of 1705, and again for over fifteen months from the end of 1707 till the beginning of 1709.

have passed over four in England. In the last period mentioned he was acting as an agent for the Church of Ireland. In the others he was attracted by pleasure or ambition. He had already many introductions to London society, through Temple, through the Irish Viceroys, and through Congreve, the most famous of then living wits. A successful pamphlet, to be presently mentioned, helped his rise to fame. London society was easy of access for a man of Swift's qualities. The divisions of rank were doubtless more strongly marked than now. Yet society was relatively so small, and concentrated in so small a space, that admission into the upper circle meant an easy introduction to every one worth knowing. Any noticeable person became, as it were, member of a club which had a tacit existence, though there was no single place of meeting or recognized organization. Swift soon became known at the coffee-houses, which have been superseded by the clubs of modern times. At one time, according to a story vague as to dates, he got the name of the "mad parson" from Addison and others, by his habit of taking half-an-hour's smart walk to and fro in the coffee-house, and then departing in silence. At last he abruptly accosted a stranger from the country: "Pray, sir, do you remember any good weather in the world?" "Yes, sir," was the reply, "I thank God I remember a great deal of good weather in my time." "That," said Swift, "is more than I can say. I never remember any weather that was not too hot, or too cold, or too wet, or too dry: but, however God Almighty contrives it, at the end of the year 'tis all very well;" with which sentiment he vanished. Whatever his introduction Swift would soon make himself felt. The *Tale of a Tub* appeared—with a very complimentary dedication to

Somers—in 1704, and revealed powers beyond the rivalry of any living author.

In the year 1705 Swift became intimate with Addison, who wrote in a copy of his *Travels in Italy*, To *Jonathan Swift, the most agreeable companion, the truest friend, and the greatest genius of his age, this work is presented by his most humble servant the author.* Though the word "genius" had scarcely its present strength of meaning, the phrase certainly implies that Addison knew Swift's authorship of the *Tale*, and with all his decorum was not repelled by its audacious satire. The pair formed a close friendship, which is honourable to both. For it proves that if Swift was imperious and Addison a little too fond of the adulation of "wits and Templars," each could enjoy the society of an intellectual equal. They met, we may fancy, like absolute kings, accustomed to the incense of courtiers, and not inaccessible to its charms; and yet glad at times to throw aside state and associate with each other without jealousy. Addison, we know, was most charming when talking to a single companion, and Delany repeats Swift's statement that, often as they spent their evenings together, they never wished for a third. Steele, for a time, was joined in what Swift calls a triumvirate; and though political strife led to a complete breach with Steele and a temporary eclipse of familiarity with Addison, it never diminished Swift's affection for his great rival. "That man," he said once, "has virtue enough to give reputation to an age," and the phrase expresses his settled opinion. Swift, however, had a low opinion of the society of the average "wit." "The worst conversation I ever heard in my life," he says, "was that at Wills' coffee-house, where the wits (as they were called) used formerly to assemble;" and he speaks with a con-

tempt recalling Pope's satire upon the "little senate," of the absurd self-importance and the foolish adulation of the students and Templars who listened to these oracles. Others have suspected that many famous coteries of which literary people are accustomed to speak with unction, probably fell as far short in reality of their traditional pleasantness. Swift's friendship with Addison was partly due, we may fancy, to the difference in temper and talent which fitted each to be complement of the other. A curious proof of the mutual goodwill is given by the history of Swift's *Baucis and Philemon*. It is a humorous and agreeable enough travesty of Ovid; a bit of good-humoured pleasantry, which we may take as it was intended. The performance was in the spirit of the time, and if Swift had not the lightness of touch of his contemporaries, Prior, Gay, Parnell, and Pope, he perhaps makes up for it by greater force and directness. But the piece is mainly remarkable because, as he tells us, Addison made him "blot out four score lines, add four score, and alter four score," though the whole consisted of only 178 verses.[3] Swift showed a complete absence of the ordinary touchiness of authors. His indifference to literary fame as to its pecuniary rewards, was conspicuous. He was too proud, as he truly said, to be vain. His sense of dignity restrained him from petty sensibility. When a clergyman regretted some emendations which had been hastily suggested by himself and accepted by Swift, Swift replied that it mattered little, and that he would not give grounds by adhering to his own opinion, for an imputation of

[3] Mr. Forster found the original MS., and gives us the exact numbers: 96 omitted, 44 added, 22 altered. The whole was 178 lines *after* the omissions.

vanity. If Swift was egotistical, there was nothing petty even in his egotism.

A piece of facetiousness, started by Swift in the last of his visits to London, has become famous. A cobbler called Partridge had set up as an astrologer, and published predictions in the style of *Zadkiel's Almanac*. Swift amused himself in the beginning of 1708 by publishing a rival prediction under the name of Isaac Bickerstaff. Bickerstaff professed that he would give verifiable and definite predictions, instead of the vague oracular utterances of his rival. The first of these predictions announced the approaching death, at 11 p.m., on March 29th, of Partridge himself. Directly after that day appeared a letter "to a person of honour," announcing the fulfilment of the prediction by the death of Partridge within four hours of the date assigned. Partridge took up the matter seriously, and indignantly declared himself, in a new Almanac, to be alive. Bickerstaff retorted in a humorous Vindication, arguing that Partridge was really dead; that his continuing to write almanacs was no proof to the contrary, and so forth. All the wits, great and small, took part in the joke: the Portuguese inquisition, so it is said, were sufficiently taken in to condemn Bickerstaff to the flames; and Steele, who started the *Tatler*, whilst the joke was afoot, adopted the name of Bickerstaff for the imaginary author. Dutiful biographers agree to admire this as a wonderful piece of fun. The joke does not strike me, I will confess, as of very exquisite flavour; but it is a curious illustration of a peculiarity to which Swift owed some of his power, and which seems to have suggested many of the mythical anecdotes about him. His humour very easily took the form of practical joking. In those days, the mutual understanding of the little clique of wits made it easy to

get a hoax taken up by the whole body. They joined to persecute poor Partridge, as the undergraduates at a modern college might join to tease some obnoxious tradesman. Swift's peculiar irony fitted him to take the lead; for it implied a singular pleasure in realizing the minute consequences of some given hypothesis, and working out in detail some grotesque or striking theory. The love of practical jokes, which seems to have accompanied him through life, is one of the less edifying manifestations of the tendency. It seems as if he could not quite enjoy a jest till it was translated into actual tangible fact. The fancy does not suffice him till it is realized. If the story about "dearly beloved Roger" be true, it is a case in point. Sydney Smith would have been content with suggesting that such a thing might be done. Swift was not satisfied till he had done it. And even if it be not true, it has been accepted because it is like the truth. We could almost fancy that if Swift had thought of Charles Lamb's famous quibble about walking on an empty stomach ("on whose empty stomach?"), he would have liked to carry it out by an actual promenade on real human flesh and blood.

Swift became intimate with Irish viceroys, and with the most famous wits and statesmen of London. But he received none of the good things bestowed so freely upon contemporary men of letters. In 1705, Addison, his intimate friend, and his junior by five years, had sprung from a garret to a comfortable office. Other men passed Swift in the race. He notes significantly in 1708, that "a young fellow," a friend of his, had just received a sinecure of 400*l.* a year, as an addition to another of 300*l.* Towards the end of 1704 he had already complained that he got "nothing but the good words and wishes of a decayed ministry, whose lives and mine will

probably wear out before they can serve either my little hopes, or their own ambition." Swift still remained in his own district, "a hedge-parson," flattered, caressed and neglected. And yet he held,[4] that it was easier to provide for ten men in the church, than for one in a civil employment. To understand his claims, and the modes by which he used to enforce them, we must advert briefly to the state of English politics. A clear apprehension of Swift's relation to the ministers of the day is essential to any satisfactory estimate of his career.

The reign of Queen Anne was a period of violent party spirit. At the end of 1703, Swift humorously declares that even the cats and dogs were infected with the Whig and Tory animosity. The "very ladies" were divided into high church and low; and, "out of zeal for religion, had hardly time to say their prayers." The gentle satire of Addison and Steele, in the *Spectator*, confirms Swift's contemporary lamentations, as to the baneful effects of party zeal upon private friendship. And yet, it has been often said, that the party issues were hopelessly confounded. Lord Stanhope argues—and he is only repeating what Swift frequently said—that Whigs and Tories had exchanged principles.[5] In later years, Swift constantly asserted that he attacked the Whigs in defence of the true Whig faith. He belonged indeed to a party, almost limited to himself: for he avowed himself to be the anomalous hybrid, a High-church Whig. We must therefore inquire a little further into the true meaning of the accepted shibboleths.

Swift had come from Ireland, saturated with the pre-

[4] See letter to *Peterborough*, May 6, 1711.

[5] In most of their principles the two parties seem to have shifted opinions since their institution in the reign of Charles II. *Examiner*, No. 43. May 31, 1711.

prejudices of his caste. The highest Tory in Ireland, as he told William, would make a tolerable Whig in England. For the English colonists in Ireland, the expulsion of James was a condition not of party success but of existence. Swift, whose personal and family interests were identified with those of the English in Ireland, could repudiate James with his whole heart, and heartily accepted the revolution; he was therefore a Whig, so far as attachment to "revolution principles" was the distinctive badge of Whiggism. Swift despised James, and he hated Popery from first to last. Contempt and hatred with him were never equivocal, and in this case they sprang as much from his energetic sense as from his early prejudices. Jacobitism was becoming a sham, and therefore offensive to men of insight into facts. Its ghost walked the earth for some time longer, and at times aped reality; but it meant mere sentimentalism or vague discontent. Swift, when asked to explain its persistence, said that when he was in pain and lying on his right side, he naturally turned to his left, though he might have no prospect of benefit from the change.[6] The country squire, who drank healths to the king over the water, was tired of the Georges, and shared the fears of the typical Western, that his lands were in danger of being sent to Hanover. The Stuarts had been in exile long enough to win the love of some of their subjects. Sufficient time had elapsed to erase from short memories the true cause of their fall. Squires and parsons did not cherish less warmly the privileges in defence of which they had sent the last Stuart king about his business. Rather the privileges had become so much a matter of

[6] Delany, p. 211.

course that the very fear of any assault seemed visionary. The Jacobitism of later days did not mean any discontent with revolution principles, but dislike to the revolution dynasty. The Whig indeed argued with true party logic, that every Tory must be a Jacobite, and every Jacobite a lover of arbitrary rule. In truth a man might wish to restore the Stuarts without wishing to restore the principles for which the Stuarts had been expelled: he might be a Jacobite without being a lover of arbitrary rule; and still more easily might he be a Tory without being a Jacobite. Swift constantly asserted—and in a sense with perfect truth—that the revolution had been carried out in defence of the Church of England, and chiefly by attached members of the Church. To be a sound churchman was, so far, to be pledged against the family which had assailed the Church.

Swift's Whiggism would naturally be strengthened by his personal relation with Temple, and with various Whigs whom he came to know through Temple. But Swift, I have said, was a churchman as well as a Whig; as staunch a churchman as Laud, and as ready, I imagine, to have gone to the block or to prison in defence of his church as any one from the days of Laud to those of Mr. Green. For a time his zeal was not called into play; the war absorbed all interests. Marlborough and Godolphin, the great heads of the family clique which dominated poor Queen Anne, had begun as Tories and churchmen, supported by a Tory majority. The war had been dictated by a national sentiment: but from the beginning it was really a Whig war: for it was a war against Louis, Popery, and the Pretender. And thus, the great men who were identified with the war, began slowly to edge over to the party whose principles were

the war principles; who hated the Pope, the Pretender, and the King of France, as their ancestors had hated Phillip of Spain, or as their descendants hated Napoleon. The war meant alliance with the Dutch, who had been the martyrs, and were the enthusiastic defenders of toleration and free thought; and it forced English ministers, almost in spite of themselves, into the most successful piece of statesmanship of the century, the Union with Scotland. Now Swift hated the Dutch and hated the Scotch, with a vehemence that becomes almost ludicrous. The margin of his Burnet was scribbled over with execrations against the Scots. "Most damnable Scots," "Scots hell-hounds," "Scotch dogs," "cursed Scots still," "hellish Scottish dogs," are a few of his spontaneous flowers of speech. His prejudices are the prejudices of his class intensified as all passions were intensified in him. Swift regarded Scotchmen as the most virulent and dangerous of all dissenters; they were represented to him by the Irish Presbyterians, the natural rivals of his church. He reviled the Union, because it implied the recognition by the State of a sect which regarded the Church of England as little better than a manifestation of Antichrist. And, in this sense, Swift's sympathies were with the Tories. For in truth the real contrast between Whigs and Tories, in respect of which there is a perfect continuity of principle, depended upon the fact that the Whigs reflected the sentiments of the middle classes, the "monied men" and the dissenters; whilst the Tories reflected the sentiments of the land and the church. Each party might occasionally adopt the commonplaces or accept the measures generally associated with its antagonists; but at bottom, the distinction was between squire

and parson on one side, tradesmen and banker on the other.

The domestic politics of the reign of Anne turned upon this difference. The history is a history of the gradual shifting of government to the Whig side, and the growing alienation of the clergy and squires, accelerated by a system which caused the fiscal burden of the war to fall chiefly upon the land. Bearing this in mind, Swift's conduct is perfectly intelligible. His first plunge into politics was in 1701. Poor King William was in the thick of the perplexities caused by the mysterious perverseness of English politicians. The king's ministers, supported by the House of Lords, had lost the command of the House of Commons. It had not yet come to be understood that the Cabinet was to be a mere committee of the House of Commons. The personal wishes of the sovereign, and the alliances and jealousies of great courtiers, were still highly important factors in the political situation; as indeed both the composition and the subsequent behaviour of the Commons could be controlled to a considerable extent by legitimate and other influences of the Crown. The Commons, unable to make their will obeyed, proceeded to impeach Somers and other ministers. A bitter struggle took place between the two Houses, which was suspended by the summer recess. At this crisis Swift published his *Discourse on the Dissensions in Athens and Rome*. The abstract political argument is as good or as bad as nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand political treatises—that is to say, a repetition of familiar commonplaces; and the mode of applying precedents from ancient politics would now strike us as pedantic. The pamphlet, however, is dignified and well-written, and the application to the immediate difficulty is pointed. His

argument is, briefly, that the House of Commons is showing a factious, tyrannical temper, identical in its nature with that of a single tyrant and as dangerous in its consequences, that it has therefore ceased to reflect the opinions of its constituents, and has endangered the sacred balance between the three primary elements of our constitution, upon which its safe working depends.

The pamphlet was from beginning to end a remonstrance against the impeachments, and therefore a defence of the Whig lords; for whom sufficiently satisfactory parallels are vaguely indicated in Pericles, Aristides, and so forth. It was "greedily bought;" it was attributed to Somers and to the great Whig bishop, Burnet, who had to disown it for fear of an impeachment. An Irish bishop, it is said, called Swift a "very positive young man" for doubting Burnet's authorship; whereupon Swift had to claim it for himself. Youthful vanity, according to his own account, induced him to make the admission, which would certainly not have been withheld by adult discretion. For the result was that Somers, Halifax, and Sunderland, three of the great Whig junto, took him up, often admitted him to their intimacy, and were liberal in promising him "the greatest preferments" should they come into power. Before long Swift had another opportunity which was also a temptation. The Tory House of Commons had passed the bill against occasional conformity. Ardent partisans generally approved this bill, as it was clearly annoying to dissenters. It was directed against the practice of qualifying for office by taking the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England without permanently conforming. It might be fairly argued—as Defoe argued, though with questionable sincerity—that such a temporary compliance would be really in-

jurious to dissent. The Church would profit by such an exhibition of the flexibility of its opponents' principles. Passions were too much heated for such arguments; and in the winter of 1703-4, people, says Swift, talked of nothing else. He was "mightily urged by some great people" to publish his opinion. An argument from a powerful writer, and a clergyman, against the bill would be very useful to his Whig friends. But Swift's high church prejudices made him hesitate. The Whig leaders assured him that nothing should induce them to vote against the bill if they expected its rejection to hurt the church or "do kindness to the dissenters." But it is precarious to argue from the professed intentions of statesmen to their real motives, and yet more precarious to argue to the consequences of their actions. Swift knew not what to think. He resolved to think no more. At last he made up his mind to write against the bill, but he made it up too late. The bill failed to pass; and Swift felt a relief in dismissing this delicate subject. He might still call himself a Whig, and exult in the growth of Whiggism. Meanwhile he persuaded himself that the dissenters and their troubles were beneath his notice.

They were soon to come again to the front. Swift came to London at the end of 1707, charged with a mission on behalf of his church. Queen Anne's Bounty was founded in 1704. The crown restored to the church the first-fruits and tenths which Henry VIII. had diverted from the papal into his own treasury, and appropriated them to the augmentation of small livings. It was proposed to get the same boon for the Church of Ireland. The whole sum amounted to about 1000*l.* a year, with a possibility of an additional 2000*l.* Swift, who had spoken of this to King, the Archbishop of

Dublin, was now to act as solicitor on behalf of the Irish clergy, and hoped to make use of his influence with Somers and Sunderland. The negotiation was to give him more trouble than he foresaw, and initiate him, before he had done with it, into certain secrets of cabinets and councils which he as yet very imperfectly appreciated. His letters to King, continued over a long period, throw much light on his motives. Swift was in England from November, 1707, till March, 1709. The year 1708 was for him, as he says, a year of suspense, a year of vast importance to his career, and marked by some characteristic utterances. He hoped to use his influence with Somers. Somers, though still out of office, was the great oracle of the Whigs, whilst Sunderland was already Secretary of State. In January, 1708, the bishopric of Waterford was vacant, and Somers tried to obtain the see for Swift. The attempt failed, but the political catastrophe of the next month gave hopes that the influence of Somers would soon be paramount. Harley, the prince of wire-pulling and back-stair intrigue, had exploded the famous Masham plot. Though this project failed, it was "reckoned," says Swift, "the greatest piece of court skill that has been acted many years." Queen Anne was to take advantage of the growing alienation of the church party to break her bondage to the Marlboroughs, and change her ministers. But the attempt was premature, and discomfited its devisers. Harley was turned out of office; Marlborough and Godolphin came into alliance with the Whig junto; and the queen's bondage seemed more complete than ever. A cabinet crisis in those days, however, took a long time. It was not till October, 1708, that the Whigs, backed by a new Parliament and strengthened by the victory of Oudenarde, were in full enjoyment of power. Somers at last became President of

the Council and Wharton Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Wharton's appointment was specially significant for Swift. He was, as even Whigs admitted, a man of infamous character, redeemed only by energy and unflinching fidelity to his party. He was licentious and a freethinker; his infidelity showed itself in the grossest outrages against common decency. If he had any religious principle it was a preference of Presbyterians, as sharing his antipathy to the church. No man could be more radically antipathetic to Swift. Meanwhile, the success of the Whigs meant in the first instance the success of the men from whom Swift had promises of preferment. He tried to use his influence as he had proposed. In June he had an interview about the first-fruits with Godolphin, to whom he had been recommended by Somers and Sunderland. Godolphin replied in vague officialisms, suggesting with studied vagueness that the Irish clergy must show themselves more grateful than the English. His meaning, as Swift thought, was that the Irish clergy should consent to a repeal of the Test Act, regarded by them and by him as the essential bulwark of the Church. Nothing definite, however, was said; and meanwhile Swift, though he gave no signs of compliance, continued to hope for his own preferment. When the final triumph of the Whigs came he was still hoping, though with obvious qualms as to his position. He begged King (in Nov. 1708) to believe in his fidelity to the church. Offers might be made to him, but "no prospect of making my fortune shall ever prevail on me to go against what becomes a man of conscience and truth, and an entire friend to the established church." He hoped that he might be appointed secretary to a projected embassy to Vienna, a position which would put him beyond the region of domestic politics.

Meanwhile he had published certain tracts which may

be taken as the manifesto of his faith at the time when his principles were being most severely tested. Would he or would he not sacrifice his churchmanship to the interests of the party with which he was still allied? There can be no doubt that by an open declaration of Whig principles in church matters—such a declaration, say, as would have satisfied Burnet—he would have qualified himself for preferment, and have been in a position to command the fulfilment of the promises made by Somers and Sunderland.

The writings in question were the *Argument to prove the inconvenience of abolishing Christianity;* a *Project for the Advancement of Religion;* and the *Sentiments of a Church of England Man.* The first, as I have said, was meant to show that the satirical powers which had given offence in the *Tale of a Tub*, could be applied without equivocation in defence of Christianity. The *Project* is a very forcible exposition of a text which is common enough in all ages—namely, that the particular age of the writer is one of unprecedented corruption, It shares, however, with Swift's other writings, the merit of downright sincerity, which convinces us that the author is not repeating platitudes, but giving his own experience and speaking from conviction. His proposals for a reform, though he must have felt them to be chimerical, are conceived in the spirit common in the days before people had begun to talk about the State and the individual. He assumes throughout that a vigorous action of the court and the government will reform the nation. He does not contemplate the now commonplace objection that such a revival of the Puritanical system might simply stimulate hypocrisy. He expressly declares that religion may be brought into fashion "by the power of the administration," and assumes that to bring religion into fashion is

the same thing as to make men religious. This view—suitable enough to Swift's imperious temper—was also the general assumption of the time. A suggestion thrown out in his pamphlet is generally said to have led to the scheme soon afterwards carried out under Harley's administration for building fifty new churches in London. A more personal touch is Swift's complaint that the clergy sacrifice their influence by "sequestering themselves" too much, and forming a separate caste. This reads a little like an implied defence of himself for frequenting London coffee-houses, when cavillers might have argued that he should be at Laracor. But like all Swift's utterances, it covered a settled principle. I have already noticed this peculiarity, which he shows elsewhere when describing himself as

> A clergyman of special note
> For shunning others of his coat;
> Which made his brethren of the gown
> Take care betimes to run him down.

The *Sentiments of a Church of England Man* is more significant. It is a summary of his unvarying creed. In politics he is a good Whig. He interprets the theory of passive obedience as meaning obedience to the "legislative power;" not therefore to the king specially; and he deliberately accepts the revolution on the plain ground of the *salus populi*. His leading maxim is that the "administration cannot be placed in too few hands nor the legislature in too many." But this political liberality is associated with unhesitating churchmanship. Sects are mischievous: to say that they are mischievous is to say that they ought to be checked in their beginning; where they exist they should be tolerated, but not to the injury of the church. And hence he reaches his leading principle that a "govern-

ment cannot give them (sects) too much ease, nor trust them with too little power." Such doctrines clearly and tersely laid down were little to the taste of the Whigs, who were more anxious than ever to conciliate the dissenters. But it was not till the end of the year that Swift applied his abstract theory to a special case. There had been various symptoms of a disposition to relax the Test Acts in Ireland. The appointment of Wharton to be Lord Lieutenant was enough to alarm Swift, even though his friend Addison was to be Wharton's secretary. In December, 1708, he published a pamphlet, ostensibly a letter from a member of the Irish to a member of the English House of Commons, in which the necessity of keeping up the Test was vigorously enforced. It is the first of Swift's political writings in which we see his true power. In those just noticed he is forced to take an impartial tone. He is trying to reconcile himself to his alliance with the Whigs, or to reconcile the Whigs to their protection of himself. He speaks as a moderator, and poses as the dignified moralist above all party-feeling. But in this letter he throws the reins upon his humour, and strikes his opponents full in the face. From his own point of view the pamphlet is admirable. He quotes Cowley's verse,

> Forbid it, heaven, my life should be
> Weighed with thy least conveniency.

The Irish, by which he means the English, and the English exclusively of the Scotch, in Ireland, represent this enthusiastic lover, and are called upon to sacrifice themselves to the political conveniency of the Whig party. Swift expresses his usual wrath against the Scots, who are eating up the land, boasts of the loyalty of the Irish Church, and taunts the Presbyterians with their tyranny

in former days. Am I to be forced, he asks, "to keep my chaplain disguised like my butler, and steal to prayers in a back room, as my grandfather used in those times when the Church of England was malignant?" Is not this a ripping up of old quarrels? Ought not all Protestants to unite against Papists? No, the enemy is the same as ever. "It is agreed among naturalists that a lion is a larger, a stronger, and more dangerous enemy than a cat; yet if a man were to have his choice, either a lion at his foot fast bound with three or four chains, his teeth drawn out, and his claws pared to the quick, or an angry cat in full liberty at his throat, he would take no long time to determine." The bound lion means the Catholic natives, whom Swift declares to be as "inconsiderable as the women and children."

Meanwhile the long first-fruits negotiation was languidly proceeding. At last it seemed to be achieved. Lord Pembroke, the outgoing Lord Lieutenant, sent Swift word that the grant had been made. Swift reported his success to Archbishop King with a very pardonable touch of complacency at his "very little" merit in the matter. But a bitter disappointment followed. The promise made had never been fulfilled. In March, 1709, Swift had again to write to the Archbishop, recounting his failure, his attempt to remonstrate with Wharton, the new Lord Lieutenant, and the too certain collapse of the whole business. The failure was complete; the promised boon was not granted, and Swift's chance of a bishopric had pretty well vanished. Halifax, the great Whig Mæcenas, and the Bufo of Pope, wrote to him in his retirement at Dublin, declaring that he had "entered into a confederacy with Mr. Addison" to urge Swift's claims upon Government, and speaking of the declining health of South,

then a Prebendary of Westminster. Swift endorsed this "I lock up this letter as a true original of courtiers and court promises," and wrote in a volume he had begged from the same person that it was the only favour "he ever received from him or his party." In the last months of his stay he had suffered cruelly from his old giddiness, and he went to Ireland, after a visit to his mother in Leicester, in sufficiently gloomy mood; retired to Laracor, and avoided any intercourse with the authorities at the Castle, excepting always Addison.

To this it is necessary to add one remark. Swift's version of the story is substantially that which I have given, and it is everywhere confirmed by contemporary letters. It shows that he separated from the Whig party when at the height of their power, and separated because he thought them opposed to the church principles which he advocated from first to last. It is most unjust, therefore to speak of Swift as a deserter from the Whigs, because he afterwards joined the church party, which shared all his strongest prejudices. I am so far from seeing any ground for such a charge, that I believe that few men have ever adhered more strictly to the principles with which they have started. But such charges have generally an element of truth; and it is easy here to point out what was the really weak point in Swift's position.

Swift's writings, with one or two trifling exceptions, were originally anonymous. As they were very apt to produce warrants for the apprehension of publisher and author, the precaution was natural enough in later years. The mask was often merely ostensible; a sufficient protection against legal prosecution, but in reality covering an open secret. When in the *Sentiments of a Church of England Man* Swift professes to conceal his name care-

fully, it may be doubted how far this is to be taken seriously. But he went much further in the letter on the Test Act. He inserted a passage intended really to blind his adversaries by a suggestion that Dr. Swift was likely to write in favour of abolishing the test; and he even complains to King of the unfairness of this treatment. His assault, therefore, upon the supposed Whig policy was clandestine. This may possibly be justified; he might even urge that he was still a Whig, and was warning ministers against measures which they had not yet adopted, and from which, as he thinks, they may still be deterred by an alteration of the real Irish feeling.[7] He complained afterwards that he was ruined—that is, as to his chances of preferment from the party—by the suspicion of his authorship of this tract. That is to say, he was "ruined" by the discovery of his true sentiments. This is to admit that he was still ready to accept preferment from the men whose supposed policy he was bitterly attacking, and that he resented their alienation as a grievance. The resentment indeed was most bitter and pertinacious. He turned savagely upon his old friends because they would not make him a bishop. The answer from their point of view was conclusive. He had made a bitter and covert attack, and he could not at once claim a merit from churchmen for defending the church against the Whigs, and revile the Whigs for not rewarding him. But inconsistency of this kind is characteristic of Swift. He thought the Whigs scoundrels for not patronizing him, and not the less scoundrels because their conduct was consistent with their own scoundrelly principles. People who differ from me must be wicked, argued this consistent

[7] Letter to King, Jan. 6th, 1709.

egotist, and their refusal to reward me is only an additional wickedness. The case appeared to him as though he had been a Nathan sternly warning a David of his sins, and for that reason deprived of honour. David could not have urged his sinful desires as an excuse for ill-treatment of Nathan. And Swift was inclined to class indifference to the welfare of the church as a sin even in an avowed Whig. Yet he had to ordinary minds forfeited any right to make non-fulfilment a grievance, when he ought to have regarded performance as a disgrace.

CHAPTER V.

THE HARLEY ADMINISTRATION.

In the autumn of 1710 Swift was approaching the end of his forty-third year. A man may well feel at forty-two that it is high time that a post should have been assigned to him. Should an opportunity be then, and not till then, put in his way, he feels that he is throwing for heavy stakes; and that failure, if failure should follow, would be irretrievable. Swift had been longing vainly for an opening. In the remarkable letter (of April, 1722) from which I have quoted the anecdote of the lost fish, he says that, "all my endeavours from a boy to distinguish myself were only for want of a great title and fortune, that I might be used like a lord by those who have an opinion of my parts; whether right or wrong is no great matter; and so the reputation of wit or great learning does the office of a blue riband or of a coach and six horses." The phrase betrays Swift's scornful self-mockery; that inverted hypocrisy which led him to call his motives by their worst names, and to disavow what he might have been sorry to see denied by others. But, like all that Swift says of himself, it also expresses a genuine conviction. Swift was ambitious, and his ambition meant an absolute need of imposing his will upon others. He was a man born to rule; not to affect thought, but to control

conduct. He was therefore unable to find full occupation, though he might seek occasional distraction, in literary pursuits. Archbishop King, who had a strange knack of irritating his correspondent—not, it seems, without intention—annoyed Swift intensely in 1711 by advising him (most superfluously) to get preferment, and with that view to write a serious treatise upon some theological question. Swift, who was in the thick of his great political struggle, answered that it was absurd to ask a man floating at sea what he meant to do when he got ashore. "Let him get there first and rest and dry himself, and then look about him." To find firm footing amidst the welter of political intrigues, was Swift's first object. Once landed in a deanery he might begin to think about writing; but he never attempted, like many men in his position, to win preferment through literary achievements. To a man of such a temperament, his career must so far have been cruelly vexatious. We are generally forced to judge of a man's life by a few leading incidents; and we may be disposed to infer too hastily that the passions roused on those critical occasions coloured the whole tenor of every-day existence. Doubtless Swift was not always fretting over fruitless prospects. He was often eating his dinner in peace and quiet, and even amusing himself with watching the Moor Park rooks or the Laracor trout. Yet it is true that so far as a man's happiness depends upon the consciousness of a satisfactory employment of his faculties, whether with a view to glory or solid comfort, Swift had abundant causes of discontent. The "conjured spirit" was still weaving ropes of sand. For ten years he had been dependent upon Temple, and his struggles to get upon his own legs had been fruitless: on Temple's death he managed when past thirty to wring

from fortune a position of bare independence, not of satisfying activity, he had not gained a fulcrum from which to move the world, but only a bare starting-point whence he might continue to work. The promises from great men had come to nothing. He might perhaps have realized them, could he have consented to be faithless to his dearest convictions; the consciousness that he had so far sacrificed his position to his principles gave him no comfort, though it nourished his pride. His enforced reticence produced an irritation against the ministers whom it had been intended to conciliate, which deepened into bitter resentment for their neglect. The year and a half passed in Ireland during 1709-10 was a period in which his day-dreams must have had a background of disappointed hopes. "I stayed above half the time," he says, "in one scurvy acre of ground, and I always left it with regret." He shut himself up at Laracor, and nourished a growing indignation against the party represented by Wharton.

Yet events were moving rapidly in England, and opening a new path for his ambition. The Whigs were in full possession of power, though at the price of a growing alienation of all who were weary of a never-ending war, or hostile to the Whig policy in Church and State. The leaders, though warned by Somers, fancied that they would strengthen their position by attacking the defeated enemy. The prosecution of Sacheverell in the winter of 1709-10, if not directed by personal spite, was meant to intimidate the high-flying Tories. It enabled the Whig leaders to indulge in a vast quantity of admirable constitutional rhetoric; but it supplied the High Church party with a martyr and a cry, and gave the needed impetus to the growing discontent. The queen took heart to revolt

against the Marlboroughs; the Whig Ministry were turned out of office; Harley became Chancellor of the Exchequer in August; and the parliament was dissolved in September, 1710, to be replaced in November by one in which the Tories had an overwhelming majority.

We are left to guess at the feelings with which Swift contemplated these changes. Their effect upon his personal prospects was still problematical. In spite of his wrathful retirement, there was no open breach between him and the Whigs. He had no personal relations with the new possessors of power. Harley and St. John, the two chiefs, were unknown to him. And, according to his own statement, he started for England once more with great reluctance in order again to take up the weary Firstfruits negociation. Wharton, whose hostility had intercepted the proposed bounty, went with his party, and was succeeded by the High Church Duke of Ormond. The political aspects were propitious for a renewed application, and Swift's previous employment pointed him out as the most desirable agent.

And now Swift suddenly comes into full light. For two or three years we can trace his movements day by day; follow the development of his hopes and fears; and see him more clearly than he could be seen by almost any of his contemporaries. The famous *Journal to Stella*, a series of letters written to Esther Johnson and Mrs. Dingley, from September, 1710, till April, 1713, is the main and central source of information. Before telling the story, a word or two may be said of the nature of this document, one of the most interesting that ever threw light upon the history of a man of genius. The *Journal* is one of the very few that were clearly written without the faintest thought of publication. There is no

indication of any such intention in the *Journal to Stella*. It never occurred to Swift that it could ever be seen by any but the persons primarily interested. The journal rather shuns politics; they will not interest his correspondent, and he is afraid of the post-office clerks—then and long afterwards often employed as spies. Interviews with ministers have scarcely more prominence than the petty incidents of his daily life. We are told that he discussed business, but the discussion is not reported. Much more is omitted which might have been of the highest interest. We hear of meetings with Addison; not a phrase of Addison's is vouchsafed to us; we go to the door of Harley or St. John; we get no distinct vision of the men who were the centres of all observation. Nor, again, are there any of those introspective passages which give to some journals the interest of a confession. What, then, is the interest of the *Journal to Stella*? One element of strange and singular fascination, to be considered hereafter, is the prattle with his correspondent. For the rest, our interest depends in great measure upon the reflections with which we must ourselves clothe the bare skeleton of facts. In reading the *Journal to Stella* we may fancy ourselves waiting in a parliamentary lobby during an excited debate. One of the chief actors hurries out at intervals; pours out a kind of hasty bulletin; tells of some thrilling incident, or indicates some threatening symptom; more frequently he seeks to relieve his anxieties by indulging in a little personal gossip, and only interjects such comments upon politics as can be compressed into a hasty ejaculation, often, as may be supposed, of the imprecatory kind. Yet he unconsciously betrays his hopes and fears; he is fresh from the thick of the fight, and we perceive that his nerves are

still quivering, and that his phrases are glowing with the ardour of the struggle. Hopes and fears are long since faded, and the struggle itself is now but a war of phantoms. Yet with the help of the *Journal* and contemporary documents, we can revive for the moment the decaying images, and cheat ourselves into the momentary persuasion that the fate of the world depends upon Harley's success, as we now hold it to depend upon Mr. Gladstone's.

Swift reached London on September 7th, 1710; the political revolution was in full action, though Parliament was not yet dissolved. The Whigs were "ravished to see him;" they clutched at him, he says, like drowning men at a twig, and the great men made him their "clumsy apologies." Godolphin was "short, dry and morose;" Somers tried to make explanations, which Swift received with studied coldness. The ever-courteous Halifax gave him dinners; and asked him to drink to the resurrection of the Whigs, which Swift refused unless he would add "to their reformation." Halifax persevered in his attentions, and was always entreating him to go down to Hampton Court; "which will cost me a guinea to his servants, and twelve shillings coach hire, and I will see him hanged first." Swift, however, retained his old friendship with the wits of the party; dined with Addison at his retreat in Chelsea, and sent a trifle or two to the *Tatler*. The elections began in October; Swift had to drive through a rabble of Westminster electors, judiciously agreeing with their sentiments to avoid dead cats and broken glasses; and though Addison was elected ("I believe," says Swift, "if he had a mind to be chosen king, he would hardly be refused"), the Tories were triumphant in every direction. And meanwhile, the Tory leaders were delightfully civil.

On the 4th of October Swift was introduced to Harley, getting himself described (with undeniable truth) "as a discontented person, who was ill used for not being Whig enough." The poor Whigs lamentably confess, he says, their ill usage of him, "but I mind them not." Their confession came too late. Harley had received him with open arms, and won not only Swift's adhesion, but his warm personal attachment. The fact is indisputable, though rather curious. Harley appears to us as a shifty and feeble politician, an inarticulate orator, wanting in principles and resolution, who made it his avowed and almost only rule of conduct that a politician should live from hand to mouth.[1] Yet his prolonged influence in Parliament seems to indicate some personal attraction, which was perceptible to his contemporaries, though rather puzzling to us. All Swift's panegyrics leave the secret in obscurity. Harley seems indeed to have been eminently respectable and decorously religious, amiable in personal intercourse, and able to say nothing in such a way as to suggest profundity instead of emptiness. His reputation as a party manager was immense; and is partly justified by his quick recognition of Swift's extraordinary qualifications. He had inferior scribblers in his pay, including, as we remember with regret, the shifty Defoe. But he wanted a man of genuine ability and character. Some months later the ministers told Swift that they had been afraid of none but him; and resolved to have him.

They got him. Harley had received him "with the greatest kindness and respect imaginable." Three days later (Oct. 7th) the firstfruits business is discussed, and Harley received the proposals as warmly as became a

[1] Swift to King, July 12, 1711.

friend of the Church, besides overwhelming Swift with civilities. Swift is to be introduced to St. John; to dine with Harley next Tuesday; and after an interview of four hours, the minister sets him down at St. James's Coffee-house in a hackney coach. "All this is odd and comical!" exclaims Swift; "he knew my Christian name very well," and, as we hear next day, begged Swift to come to him often, but not to his levée: "that was not a place for friends to meet." On the 10th of October, within a week from the first introduction, Harley promises to get the firstfruits business, over which the Whigs had haggled for years, settled by the following Sunday. Swift's exultation breaks out. On the 14th he declares that he stands ten times better with the new people than ever he did with the old, and is forty times more caressed. The triumph is sharpened by revenge. Nothing, he says of the sort was ever compassed so soon; "and purely done by my personal credit with Mr. Harley, who is so excessively obliging, that I know not what to make of it, unless to show the rascals of the other side that they used a man unworthily who deserved better." A passage on Nov. 8th sums up his sentiments. "Why," he says in answer to something from Stella, "should the Whigs think I came from Ireland to leave them? Sure my journey was no secret! I protest sincerely, I did all I could to hinder it, as the dean can tell you, though now I do not repent it. But who the devil cares what they think? Am I under obligations in the least to any of them all? Rot them for ungrateful dogs; I will make them repent their usage before I leave this place." The thirst for vengeance may not be edifying; the political zeal was clearly not of the purest; but in truth, Swift's party prejudices and his personal resentments are fused into indissoluble unity

Hatred of Whig principles and resentment of Whig "ill-usage" of himself, are one and the same thing. Meanwhile, Swift was able (on Nov. 4) to announce his triumph to the Archbishop. He was greatly annoyed by an incident, of which he must also have seen the humorous side. The Irish bishops had bethought themselves after Swift's departure that he was too much of a Whig to be an effective solicitor. They proposed therefore to take the matter out of his hands and apply to Ormond, the new Lord Lieutenant. Swift replied indignantly; the thing was done, however, and he took care to let it be known that the whole credit belonged to Harley, and of course, in a subordinate sense, to himself. Official formalities were protracted for months longer, and formed one excuse for Swift's continued absence from Ireland; but we need not trouble ourselves with the matter further.

Swift's unprecedented leap into favour meant more than a temporary success. The intimacy with Harley and with St. John rapidly developed. Within a few months, Swift had forced his way into the very innermost circle of official authority. A notable quarrel seems to have given the final impulse to his career. In February, 1711, Harley offered him a fifty-pound note. This was virtually to treat him as a hireling instead of an ally. Swift resented the offer as an intolerable affront. He refused to be reconciled without ample apology, and after long entreaties. His pride was not appeased for ten days, when the reconciliation was sealed by an invitation from Harley to a Saturday dinner.[2] On Saturdays, the Lord

[2] These dinners, it may be noticed, seem to have been held on Thursdays when Harley had to attend the court at Windsor. This may lead to some confusion with the Brothers' Club, which met on Thursdays during the parliamentary session.

Keeper (Harcourt) and the Secretary of State (St. John) dined alone with Harley: "and at last," says Swift, in reporting the event, "they have consented to let me among them on that day." He goes next day, and already chides Lord Rivers for presuming to intrude into the sacred circle. "They call me nothing but Jonathan," he adds; "and I said I believed they would leave me Jonathan, as they found me." These dinners were continued, though they became less select. Harley called Saturday his "whipping-day;" and Swift was the heartiest wielder of the lash. From the same February, Swift began to dine regularly with St. John every Sunday; and we may note it as some indication of the causes of his later preference of Harley, that on one occasion he has to leave St. John early. The company, he says, were in constraint, because he would suffer no man to swear or talk indecently in his presence.

Swift had thus conquered the ministry at a blow. What services did he render in exchange? His extraordinary influence seems to have been due in a measure to sheer force of personal ascendency. No man could come into contact with Swift without feeling that magnetic influence. But he was also doing a more tangible service. In thus admitting Swift to their intimacy, Harley and St. John were in fact paying homage to the rising power of the pen. Political writers had hitherto been hirelings, and often little better than spies. No preceding, and, we may add, no succeeding writer ever achieved such a position by such means. The press has become more powerful as a whole: but no particular representative of the press has made such a leap into power. Swift came at the time when the influence of political writing was already great: and when the personal favour of a prominent minister

could still work miracles. Harley made him a favourite of the old stamp, to reward his supremacy in the use of the new weapon.

Swift had begun in October by avenging himself upon Godolphin's coldness, in a copy of Hudibrastic verses about the virtues of Sid Hamet the Magician's Rod—that is, the treasurer's staff of office—which had a wonderful success. He fell savagely upon the hated Wharton not long after, in what he calls "a damned libellous pamphlet," of which 2000 copies were sold in two days. Libellous, indeed, is a faint epithet to describe a production which, if its statements be true, proves that Wharton deserved to be hunted from society. Charges of lying, treachery, atheism, Presbyterianism, debauchery, indecency, shameless indifference to his own reputation and his wife's, the vilest corruption and tyranny in his government are piled upon his victim as thickly as they will stand. Swift does not expect to sting Wharton. "I neither love nor hate him," he says. "If I see him after this is published, he will tell me 'that he is damnably mauled;' and then, with the easiest transition in the world, ask about the weather, or the time of day." Wharton might possibly think that abuse of this kind might almost defeat itself by its own virulence. But Swift had already begun writings of a more statesmanlike and effective kind.

A paper war was already raging when Swift came to London. The *Examiner* had been started by St. John, with the help of Atterbury, Prior, and others; and, opposed for a short time by Addison, in the *Whig Examiner*. Harley, after granting the first-fruits, had told Swift, that the great want of the ministry was "some good pen," to keep up the spirits of the party. The

Examiner, however, was in need of a firmer and more regular manager; and Swift took it in hand, his first weekly article appearing November 2nd, 1710, his last on June 14th, 1711. His *Examiners* achieved an immediate and unprecedented success. And yet to say the truth, a modern reader is apt to find them decidedly heavy. No one, indeed, can fail to perceive the masculine sense, the terseness and precision of the utterance. And yet many writings which produced less effect are far more readable now. The explanation is simple, and applies to most of Swift's political writings. They are all rather acts than words. They are blows struck in a party-contest: and their merit is to be gauged by their effect. Swift cares nothing for eloquence, or logic, or invective—and little, it must be added, for veracity—so long as he hits his mark. To judge him by a merely literary standard, is to judge a fencer by the grace of his attitudes. Some high literary merits are implied in efficiency, as real grace is necessary to efficient fencing: but in either case, a clumsy blow which reaches the heart is better than the most dexterous flourish in the air. Swift's eye is always on the end, as a good marksman looks at nothing but the target.

What, then, is Swift's aim in the *Examiner*? Mr. Kinglake has told us how a great journal throve by discovering what was the remark that was on every one's lips, and making the remark its own. Swift had the more dignified task of really striking the keynote for his party. He was to put the ministerial theory into that form in which it might seem to be the inevitable utterance of strong common-sense. Harley's supporters were to see in Swift's phrases just what they would themselves have said—if they had been able. The shrewd, sturdy, narrow prejudices of the average Englishman were to be pressed

into the service of the ministry, by showing how admirably they could be clothed in the ministerial formulas.

The real question, again, as Swift saw, was the question of peace. Whig and Tory, as he said afterwards,[3] were really obsolete words. The true point at issue was peace or war. The purpose, therefore, was to take up his ground so that peace might be represented as the natural policy of the church or Tory party; and war as the natural fruit of the selfish Whigs. It was necessary, at the same time, to show that this was not the utterance of high-flying Toryism or downright Jacobitism, but the plain dictate of a cool and impartial judgment. He was not to prove but to take for granted that the war had become intolerably burdensome; and to express the growing wish for peace in terms likely to conciliate the greatest number of supporters. He was to lay down the platform which could attract as many as possible, both of the zealous Tories and of the lukewarm Whigs.

Measured by their fitness for this end, the *Examiners* are admirable. Their very fitness for the end implies the absence of some qualities which would have been more attractive to posterity. Stirring appeals to patriotic sentiment may suit a Chatham rousing a nation to action; but Swift's aim is to check the extravagance in the name of selfish prosaic-prudence. The philosophic reflections of Burke, had Swift been capable of such reflection, would have flown above the heads of his hearers. Even the polished and elaborate invective of Junius would have been out of place. No man, indeed, was a greater master of invective than Swift. He shows it in the *Examiners* by onslaughts upon the detested Wharton. He shows,

[3] *Letter to a Whig Lord*, 1712.

too, that he is not restrained by any scruples when it comes in his way to attack his old patrons, and he adopts the current imputations upon their private character. He could roundly accuse Cowper of bigamy, and Somers—the Somers whom he had elaborately praised some years before in the dedication to the *Tale of a Tub*—of the most abominable perversion of justice. But these are taunts thrown out by the way. The substance of the articles is not invective, but profession of political faith. One great name, indeed, is of necessity assailed. Marlborough's fame was a tower of strength for the Whigs. His duchess and his colleagues had fallen; but whilst war was still raging, it seemed impossible to dismiss the greatest living commander. Yet whilst Marlborough was still in power, his influence might be used to bring back his party. Swift's treatment of this great adversary is significant. He constantly took credit for having suppressed many attacks[4] upon Marlborough. He was convinced that it would be dangerous for the country to dismiss a general whose very name carried victory.[5] He felt that it was dangerous for the party to make an unreserved attack upon the popular hero. Lord Rivers, he says, cursed the *Examiner* to him for speaking civilly of Marlborough; and St. John, upon hearing of this, replied that if the counsels of such men as Rivers were taken, the ministry "would be blown up in twenty-four hours." Yet Marlborough was the war personified; and the way to victory lay over Marlborough's body. Nor had Swift any regard for the man himself, who, he says,[6] is certainly a vile man, and has no sort of merit except the military—as "covetous as hell, and as

[4] *Journal to Stella*, Feb. 6th, 1712, and Jan. 8th and 25th, 1712.

[5] *Ib.* Jan. 7th, 1711. [6] *Ib.* Jan. 21st, 1712.

ambitious as the prince of it."[7] The whole case of the ministry implied the condemnation of Marlborough. Most modern historians would admit that continuance of the war could at this time be desired only by fanatics or interested persons. A psychologist might amuse himself by inquiring what were the actual motives of its advocates; in what degrees personal ambition, a misguided patriotism, or some more sordid passions were blended. But in the ordinary dialect of political warfare there is no room for such refinements. The theory of Swift and Swift's patrons was simple. The war was the creation of the Whig "ring;" it was carried on for their own purposes by the stock-jobbers and "monied men," whose rise was a new political phenomenon, and who had introduced the diabolical contrivance of public debts. The landed interest and the church had been hoodwinked too long by the union of corrupt interests supported by Dutchmen, Scotchmen, dissenters, freethinkers, and other manifestations of the evil principle. Marlborough was the head and patron of the whole. And what was Marlborough's motive? The answer was simple. It was that which has been assigned, with even more emphasis, by Macaulay —Avarice. The twenty-seventh *Examiner* (Feb. 8th, 1711) probably contains the compliments to which Rivers objected. Swift, in fact, admits that Marlborough had all the great qualities generally attributed to him; but all are spoilt by this fatal blemish. How far the accusation was true matters little. It is put at least with force and dignity; and it expressed in the pithiest shape Swift's genuine conviction, that the war now meant corrupt self-interest. Invective, as Swift knew well enough in his

[7] *Ib.* Dec. 31st, 1710.

cooler moments, is a dangerous weapon, apt to recoil on the assailant unless it carries conviction. The attack on Marlborough does not betray personal animosity; but the deliberate and the highly plausible judgment of a man determined to call things by their right names, and not to be blinded by military glory.

This, indeed, is one of the points upon which Swift's Toryism was unlike that of some later periods. He always disliked and despised soldiers and their trade. "It will no doubt be a mighty comfort to our grandchildren," he says in another pamphlet,[8] "when they see a few rags hung up in Westminster Hall which cost a hundred millions, whereof they are paying the arrears, to boast as beggars do that their grandfathers were rich and great." And in other respects he has some right to claim the adhesion of thorough Whigs. His personal attacks, indeed, upon the party have a questionable sound. In his zeal he constantly forgets that the corrupt ring which he denounces were the very men from whom he expected preferment "I well remember," he says[9] elsewhere, "the clamours often raised during the late reign of that party (the Whigs) against the leaders by those who thought their merits were not rewarded; and they had, no doubt, reason on their side, because it is, no doubt, a misfortune to forfeit honour and conscience for nothing"—rather an awkward remark from a man who was calling Somers "a false, deceitful rascal" for not giving him a bishopric! His eager desire to make the "ungrateful dogs" repent their ill-usage of him prompts attacks which injure his own character with that of his former associates. But he has some ground for saying that Whigs have changed their

[8] *Conduct of the Allies.* [9] *Advice to October Club.*

principles, in the sense that their dislike of prerogative and of standing armies had curiously declined when the Crown and the army came to be on their side. Their enjoyment of power had made them soften some of the prejudices learnt in days of depression. Swift's dislike of what we now call "militarism" really went deeper than any party sentiment; and in that sense, as we shall hereafter see, it had really most affinity with a radicalism which would have shocked Whigs and Tories alike. But in this particular case it fell in with the Tory sentiment. The masculine vigour of the *Examiners* served the ministry, who were scarcely less in danger from the excessive zeal of their more bigoted followers than from the resistance of the Whig minority. The pig-headed country squires had formed an October Club, to muddle themselves with beer and politics, and hoped—good honest souls—to drive ministers into a genuine attack on the corrupt practices of their predecessors. All Harley's skill in intriguing and wire-pulling would be needed. The ministry, said Swift (on March 4th), "stood like an isthmus" between Whigs and violent Tories. He trembled for the result. They are able seamen, but the tempest "is too great, the ship too rotten, and the crew all against them." Somers had been twice in the queen's closet. The Duchess of Somerset, who had succeeded the Duchess of Marlborough, might be trying to play Mrs. Masham's game. Harley, "though the most fearless man alive," seemed to be nervous, and was far from well. "Pray God preserve his health," says Swift; "everything depends upon it." Four days later, Swift is in an agony. "My heart," he exclaims, "is almost broken." Harley had been stabbed by Guiscard (March 8th, 1711) at the council-board. Swift's letters and journals show an agitation, in which personal

affection seems to be even stronger than political anxiety. "Pray pardon my distraction," he says to Stella, in broken sentences. "I now think of all his kindness to me. The poor creature now lies stabbed in his bed by a desperate French popish villain. Good night, and God bless you both, and pity me; I want it." He wrote to King under the same excitement. Harley, he says, "has always treated me with the tenderness of a parent, and never refused me any favour I asked for a friend; therefore I hope your Grace will excuse the character of this letter." He apologizes again in a postscript for his confusion; it must be imputed to the "violent pain of mind I am in —greater than ever I felt in my life." The danger was not over for three weeks. The chief effect seems to have been that Harley became popular as the intended victim of an hypothetical Popish conspiracy; he introduced an applauded financial scheme in Parliament after his recovery, and was soon afterwards made Earl of Oxford by way of consolation. "This man," exclaimed Swift, "has grown by persecutions, turnings out, and stabbings. What waiting and crowding and bowing there will be at his levee!"

Swift had meanwhile (April 26) retired to Chelsea "for the air," and to have the advantage of a compulsory walk into town (two miles, or 5748 steps each way, he calculates). He was liable, indeed, to disappointment on a rainy day, when "all the three stage-coaches" were taken up by the "cunning natives of Chelsea;" but he got a lift to town in a gentleman's coach for a shilling. He bathed in the river on the hot nights, with his Irish servant, Patrick, standing on the bank to warn off passing boats. The said Patrick, who is always getting drunk, whom Swift cannot find it in his heart to dismiss in England, who

atones for his general carelessness and lying by buying a linnet for Dingley, making it wilder than ever in his attempts to tame it, is a characteristic figure in the journal. In June Swift gets ten days' holiday at Wycombe, and in the summer he goes down pretty often with the ministers to Windsor. He came to town in two hours and forty minutes on one occasion: "twenty miles are nothing here." The journeys are described in one of the happiest of his occasional poems—

"'Tis (let me see) three years or more
(October next it will be four)
Since Harley bid me first attend
And chose me for an humble friend:
Would take me in his coach to chat
And question me of this or that:
As "What's o'clock?" and "How's the wind?"
"Whose chariot's that we left behind?"
Or gravely try to read the lines
Writ underneath the country signs.
Or, "Have you nothing new to-day,
From Pope, from Parnell, or from Gay?"
Such tattle often entertains
My lord and me as far as Staines,
As once a week we travel down
To Windsor, and again to town,
Where all that passes *inter nos*
Might be proclaimed at Charing Cross.

And when, it is said, St. John was disgusted by the frivolous amusements of his companions; and his political discourses might be interrupted by Harley's exclamation, "Swift, I am up; there's a cat"—the first who saw a cat or an old woman, winning the game.

Swift and Harley were soon playing a more exciting game. Prior had been sent to France to renew peace negotiations, with elaborate mystery. Even Swift was

kept in ignorance. On his return Prior was arrested by officious custom-house officers, and the fact of his journey became public. Swift took advantage of the general interest by a pamphlet intended to "bite the town." Its political purpose, according to Swift, was to "furnish fools with something to talk of;" to draw a false scent across the trail of the angry and suspicious Whigs. It seems difficult to believe that any such effect could be produced or anticipated; but the pamphlet, which purports to be an account of Prior's journey given by a French valet, desirous of passing himself off as a secretary, is an amusing example of Swift's power of grave simulation of realities. The peace negotiations brought on a decisive political struggle. Parliament was to meet in September. The Whigs resolved to make a desperate effort. They had lost the House of Commons, but were still strong in the Peers. The Lords were not affected by the rapid oscillations of public opinion. They were free from some of the narrower prejudices of country squires, and true to a revolution which gave the chief power for more than a century to the aristocracy: while the recent creations had ennobled the great Whig leaders, and filled the bench with low churchmen. Marlborough and Godolphin had come over to the Whig junto, and an additional alliance was now made. Nottingham had been passed over by Harley, as it seems, for his extreme Tory principles. In his wrath, he made an agreement with the other extreme. By one of the most disgraceful bargains of party history, Nottingham was to join the Whigs in attacking the peace, whilst the Whigs were to buy his support by accepting the Occasional Conformity Bill—the favourite high church measure. A majority in the House of Lords could not indeed determine the victory. The Government of Eng-

land, says Swift in 1715,[1] "cannot move a step while the House of Commons continues to dislike proceedings or persons employed." But the plot went further. The House of Lords might bring about a deadlock, as it had done before. The queen, having thrown off the rule of the Duchess of Marlborough, had sought safety in the rule of two mistresses, Mrs. Masham and the Duchess of Somerset. The Duchess of Somerset was in the Whig interest; and her influence with the queen caused the gravest anxiety to Swift and the ministry. She might induce Anne to call back the Whigs, and in a new House of Commons, elected under a Whig ministry wielding the crown influence and appealing to the dread of a discreditable peace, the majority might be reversed. Meanwhile Prince Eugene was expected to pay a visit to England, bringing fresh proposals for war, and stimulating by his presence the enthusiasm of the Whigs.

Towards the end of September the Whigs began to pour in a heavy fire of pamphlets, and Swift rather meanly begs the help of St. John and the law. But he is confident of victory. Peace is certain; and a peace "very much to the honour and advantage of England." The Whigs are furious; "but we'll wherret them, I warrant, boys." Yet he has misgivings. The news comes of the failure of the Tory expedition against Quebec, which was to have anticipated the policy and the triumphs of Chatham. Harley only laughs as usual; but St. John is cruelly vexed, and begins to suspect his colleagues of suspecting him. Swift listens to both, and tries to smooth matters; but he is growing serious. "I am half weary of them all," he exclaims, and begins to talk of

[1] *Behaviour of Queen's Ministry.*

retiring to Ireland. Harley has a slight illness, and Swift is at once in a fright. "We are all undone without him," he says, "so pray for him, sirrahs!" Meanwhile, as the parliamentary struggle comes nearer, Swift launches the pamphlet which has been his summer's work. The *Conduct of the Allies* is intended to prove what he had taken for granted in the *Examiners*. It is to show, that is, that the war has ceased to be demanded by national interests. We ought always to have been auxiliaries; we chose to become principals; and have yet so conducted the war that all the advantages have gone to the Dutch. The explanation of course is the selfishness or corruption of the great Whig junto. The pamphlet, forcible and terse in the highest degree, had a success due in part to other circumstances. It was as much a State paper as a pamphlet; a manifesto obviously inspired by the ministry and containing the facts and papers which were to serve in the coming debates. It was published on Nov. 27th; on December 1st the second edition was sold in five hours; and by the end of January 11,000 copies had been sold. The parliamentary struggle began on December 7th; and the amendment to the address, declaring that no peace could be safe which left Spain to the Bourbons, was moved by Nottingham, and carried by a small majority. Swift had foreseen this danger; he had begged ministers to work up the majority; and the defeat was due to Harley's carelessness. It was Swift's temper to anticipate though not to yield to the worst. He could see nothing but ruin. Every rumour increased his fears, The queen had taken the hand of the Duke of Somerset on leaving the House of Lords, and refused Shrewsbury's. She must be going over. Swift, in his despair, asked St. John to find him some foreign post, where he might be out of

harm's way if the Whigs should triumph. St. John laughed and affected courage, but Swift refused to be comforted. Harley told him that "all would be well;" but Harley for the moment had lost his confidence. A week after the vote he looks upon the ministry as certainly ruined; and "God knows," he adds, "what may be the consequences." By degrees a little hope began to appear; though the ministry, as Swift still held, could expect nothing till the Duchess of Somerset was turned out. By way of accelerating this event, he hit upon a plan, which he had reason to repent, and which nothing but his excitement could explain. He composed and printed one of his favourite squibs, the *Windsor Prophecy*, and though Mrs. Masham persuaded him not to publish it, distributed too many copies for secrecy to be possible. In this production, now dull enough, he calls the duchess "carrots," as a delicate hint at her red hair, and says that she murdered her second husband.[2] These statements, even if true, were not conciliatory; and it was folly to irritate without injuring. Meanwhile reports of ministerial plans gave him a little courage; and in a day or two the secret was out. He was on his way to the post on Saturday, December 28th, when the great news came. The ministry had resolved on something like a *coup d'état*, to be long mentioned with horror by all orthodox Whigs and Tories. "I have broke open my letter," scribbled Swift in a coffee-house, "and tore it into the bargain, to let you know that

[2] There was enough plausibility in this scandal to give it a sting. The duchess had left her second husband, a Mr. Thynne, immediately after the marriage ceremony, and fled to Holland. There Count Coningsmark paid her his addresses, and, coming to England, had Mr. Thynne shot by ruffians in Pall Mall. See the curious case in the *State Trials*, vol. ix.

we are all safe. The queen has made no less than twelve new peers . . . . and has turned out the Duke of Somerset. She is awaked at last, and so is Lord Treasurer. I want nothing now but to see the duchess out. But we shall do without her. We are all extremely happy. Give me joy, sirrahs!" The Duke of Somerset was not out; but a greater event happened within three days; the Duke of Marlborough was removed from all his employments. The Tory victory was for the time complete.

Here, too, was the culminating point of Swift's career. Fifteen months of energetic effort had been crowned with success. He was the intimate of the greatest men in the country; and the most powerful exponent of their policy. No man in England, outside the ministry, enjoyed a wider reputation. The ball was at his feet; and no position open to a clergyman beyond his hopes. Yet from this period begins a decline. He continued to write, publishing numerous squibs, of which many have been lost, and occasionally firing a gun of heavier metal. But nothing came from him having the authoritative and masterly tone of the *Conduct of the Allies*. His health broke down. At the beginning of April, 1712, he was attacked by a distressing complaint; and his old enemy, giddiness, gave him frequent alarms. The daily journal ceased, and was not fairly resumed till December, though its place is partly supplied by occasional letters. The political contest had changed its character. The centre of interest was transferred to Utrecht, where negotiations began in January, to be protracted over fifteen months: the ministry had to satisfy the demand for peace, without shocking the national self-esteem. Meanwhile jealousies were rapidly developing themselves, which Swift watched with ever-growing anxiety.

Swift's personal influence remained or increased. He drew closer to Oxford, but was still friendly with St. John; and to the public his position seemed more imposing than ever. Swift was not the man to bear his honours meekly. In the early period of his acquaintance with St. John (February 12, 1711), he sends the Prime Minister into the House of Commons, to tell the Secretary of State that "I would not dine with him if he dined late." He is still a novice at the Saturday dinners when the Duke of Shrewsbury appears: Swift whispers that he does not like to see a stranger among them; and St. John has to explain that the Duke has written for leave. St. John then tells Swift that the Duke of Buckingham desires his acquaintance. The Duke, replied Swift, has not made sufficient advances: and he always expects greater advances from men in proportion to their rank. Dukes and great men yielded, if only to humour the pride of this audacious parson: and Swift soon came to be pestered by innumerable applicants, attracted by his ostentation of influence. Even ministers applied through him. "There is not one of them," he says, in January, 1713, "but what will employ me as gravely to speak for them to Lord Treasurer, as if I were their brother or his." He is proud of the burden of influence with the great, though he affects to complain. The most vivid picture of Swift in all his glory, is in a familiar passage from Bishop Kennett's diary:—

"Swift," says Kennett, in 1713, "came into the coffee-house, and had a bow from everybody but me. When I came to the antechamber to wait before prayers, Dr. Swift was the principal man of talk and business, and acted as minister of requests. He was soliciting the Earl of Arran to speak to his brother the Duke of Ormond to get a chaplain's place established in

the garrison of Hull, for Mr. Fiddes, a clergyman in that neighbourhood, who had lately been in jail, and published sermons to pay fees. He was promising Mr. Thorold to undertake with my Lord Treasurer that according to his petition he should obtain a salary of 200*l.* per annum, as minister of the English Church at Rotterdam. He stopped F. Gwynne, Esq., going in with the red bag to the queen, and told him aloud he had something to say to him from my Lord Treasurer. He talked with the son of Dr. Davenant to be sent abroad, and took out his pocket-book and wrote down several things as *memoranda*, to do for him. He turned to the fire, and took out his gold watch, and telling him the time of day, complained it was very late. A gentleman said, "it was too fast." "How can I help it," says the Doctor, "if the courtiers give me a watch that won't go right?" Then he instructed a young nobleman that the best poet in England was Mr. Pope (a Papist), who had begun a translation of Homer into English verse, for which, he said, he must have them all subscribe. 'For,' says he, 'the author *shall not* begin to print till *I have* a thousand guineas for him.' Lord Treasurer, after leaving the Queen, came through the room, beckoning Dr. Swift to follow him; both went off just before prayers."

There is undoubtedly something offensive in this blustering self-assertion. "No man," says Johnson, with his usual force, "can pay a more servile tribute to the great than by suffering his liberty in their presence to aggrandize him in his own esteem." Delicacy was not Swift's strong point; his compliments are as clumsy as his invectives are forcible; and he shows a certain taint of vulgarity in his intercourse with social dignitaries. He is perhaps avenging himself for the humiliations received at Moor Park. He has a Napoleonic absence of magnanimity. He likes to relish his triumph; to accept the pettiest as well as the greatest rewards; to flaunt his

splendours in the eyes of the servile as well as to enjoy the consciousness of real power. But it would be a great mistake to infer that this ostentatiousness of authority concealed real servility. Swift preferred to take the bull by the horns. He forced himself upon ministers by self-assertion; and he held them in awe of him as the lion-tamer keeps down the latent ferocity of the wild beast. He never takes his eye off his subjects, nor lowers his imperious demeanour. He retained his influence, as Johnson observes, long after his services had ceased to be useful. And all this demonstrative patronage meant real and energetic work. We may note, for example, and it incidentally confirms Kennett's accuracy, that he was really serviceable to Davenant,[3] and that Fiddes got the chaplaincy at Hull. No man ever threw himself with more energy into the service of his friends. He declared afterwards that in the days of his credit he had done fifty times more for fifty people, from whom he had received no obligations, than Temple had done for him.[4] The journal abounds in proofs that this was not overstated. There is "Mr. Harrison," for example, who has written "some mighty pretty things." Swift takes him up; rescues him from the fine friends who are carelessly tempting him to extravagance; tries to start him in a continuation of the *Tatler;* exults in getting him a secretaryship abroad, which he declares to be "the prettiest post in Europe for a young gentleman;" and is most unaffectedly and deeply grieved when the poor lad dies of a fever. He is carrying 100*l.* to his young friend, when he hears of his death. "I told Parnell I was afraid to knock at the door, my mind misgave me," he says. On

[3] Letters from Smalridge and Dr. Davenant in 1713.

[4] Letter to Lord Palmerston, Jan. 29th, 1726.

his way to bring help to Harrison, he goes to see a "poor poet, one Mr. Diaper, in a nasty garret, very sick," and consoles him with twenty guineas from Lord Bolingbroke. A few days before he has managed to introduce Parnell to Harley, or rather to contrive it so that "the ministry desire to be acquainted with Parnell, and not Parnell with the ministry." His old schoolfellow Congreve was in alarm about his appointments. Swift spoke at once to Harley, and went off immediately to report his success to Congreve: "so," he says, "I have made a worthy man easy, and that is a good day's work."[5] One of the latest letters in his journal refers to his attempt to serve his other schoolfellow, Berkeley. "I will favour him as much as I can," he says; "this I think I am bound to in honour and conscience, to use all my little credit toward helping forward men of worth in the world." He was always helping less conspicuous men; and he prided himself, with justice, that he had been as helpful to Whigs as to Tories. The ministry complained that he never came to them "without a Whig in his sleeve." Besides his friend Congreve, he recommended Rowe for preferment, and did his best to protect Steele and Addison. No man of letters ever laboured more heartily to promote the interests of his fellow-craftsmen, as few have ever had similar opportunities.

Swift, it is plain, desired to use his influence magnificently. He hoped to make his reign memorable by splendid patronage of literature. The great organ of munificence was the famous Brothers' Club, of which he was the animating spirit. It was founded in June, 1711, during Swift's absence at Wycombe; it was intended to "advance conversation and friendship," and obtain

[5] June 22nd, 1711.

patronage for deserving persons. It was to include none but wits and men able to help wits, and, "if we go on as we begun," says Swift, "no other club in this town will be worth talking of." In March, 1712, it consisted, as Swift tells us, of nine lords and ten commoners.[6] It excluded Harley and the Lord Keeper (Harcourt) apparently as they were to be the distributors of the patronage; but it included St. John and several leading ministers, Harley's son and son-in-law, and Harcourt's son; whilst literature was represented by Swift, Arbuthnot, Prior, and Friend, all of whom were more or less actively employed by the ministry. The club was therefore composed of the ministry and their dependents, though it had not avowedly a political colouring. It dined on Thursday during the Parliamentary session, when the political squibs of the day were often laid on the table, including Swift's famous *Windsor Prophecy*, and subscriptions were sometimes collected for such men as Diaper and Harrison. It flourished, however, for little more than the first season. In the winter of 1712-13 it began to suffer from the common disease of such institutions. Swift began to complain bitterly of the extravagance of the charges. He gets the club to leave a tavern in which the bill[7] "for four dishes and four, first

[6] The list, so far as I can make it out from references in the journal, appears to include more names. One or two had probably retired. The peers are as follows:—The Dukes of Shrewsbury (perhaps only suggested), Ormond and Beaufort; Lords Orrery, Rivers, Dartmouth, Dupplin, Masham, Bathurst, and Lansdowne (the last three were of the famous twelve); and the commoners are Swift, Sir R. Raymond, Jack Hill, Disney, Sir W. Wyndham, St. John, Prior, Friend, Arbuthnot, Harley (son of Lord Oxford), and Harcourt (son of Lord Harcourt).

[7] Feb. 28th, 1712.

and second course, without wine and drink," had been 21*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* The number of guests, it seems, was fourteen. Next winter the charges are divided. "It cost me nineteen shillings to-day for my club dinner," notes Swift, Dec. 18, 1712. "I don't like it." Swift had a high value for every one of the nineteen shillings. The meetings became irregular: Harley was ready to give promises, but no patronage: and Swift's attendance falls off. Indeed, it may be noted that he found dinners and suppers full of danger to his health. He constantly complains of their after-effects; and partly perhaps for that reason he early ceases to frequent coffee-houses. Perhaps too his contempt for coffee-house society, and the increasing dignity which made it desirable to keep possible applicants at a distance, had much to do with this. The Brothers' Club, however, was long remembered by its members, and in later years they often address each other by the old fraternal title.

One design which was to have signalized Swift's period of power, suggested the only paper which he had ever published with his name. It was a "proposal for correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English language," published in May, 1712, in the form of a letter to Harley. The letter itself, written offhand in six hours (Feb. 21, 1712), is not of much value; but Swift recurs to the subject frequently enough to show that he really hoped to be the founder of an English Academy. Had Swift been his own minister instead of the driver of a minister, the project might have been started. The rapid development of the political struggle sent Swift's academy to the limbo provided for such things; and few English authors will regret the failure of a scheme unsuited to our natural

idiosyncrasy, and calculated, as I fancy, to end in nothing but an organization of pedantry.

One remark meanwhile occurs which certainly struck Swift himself. He says (March 17, 1712) that Sacheverel, the Tory martyr, has come to him for patronage, and observes that when he left Ireland neither of them could have anticipated such a relationship. "This," he adds, "is the seventh I have now provided for since I came, and can do nothing for myself." Hints at a desire for preferment do not appear for some time; but as he is constantly speaking of an early return to Ireland, and is as regularly held back by the entreaties of the ministry, there must have been at least an implied promise. A hint had been given that he might be made chaplain to Harley, when the minister became Earl of Oxford. "I will be no man's chaplain alive," he says. He remarks about the same time (May 23, 1711) that it "would look extremely little" if he returned without some distinction; but he will not beg for preferment. The ministry, he says in the following August, only want him for one bit of business (the *Conduct of the Allies* presumably). When that is done, he will take his leave of them. "I never got a penny from them nor expect it." The only post for which he made a direct application was that of historiographer.* He had made considerable preparations for his so-called *History of the Last Four Years of Queen Anne*, which appeared posthumously; and which may be described as one of his political pamphlets without the vigour[8]—a dull statement

* Its authenticity was doubted, but, as I think, quite gratuitously, by Johnson, by Lord Stanhope, and, as Stanhope says, by Macaulay. The dulness is easily explicable by the circumstances of the composition.

of facts put together by a partisan affecting the historical character. This application, however, was not made till April, 1714, when Swift was possessed of all the preferment that he was destined to receive. He considered in his haughty way that he should be entreated rather than entreat; and ministers were perhaps slow to give him anything which could take him away from them. A secret influence was at work against him. The *Tale of a Tub* was brought up against him; and imputations upon his orthodoxy were common. Nottingham even revenged himself by describing Swift in the House of Lords as a divine "who is hardly suspected of being a Christian." Such insinuations were also turned to account by the Duchess of Somerset, who retained her influence over Anne in spite of Swift's attacks. His journal in the winter of 1712-13 shows growing discontent. In December, 1712, he resolves to write no more till something is done for him. He will get under shelter before he makes more enemies. He declares that he is "soliciting nothing" (February 4, 1713), but he is growing impatient. Harley is kinder than ever. "Mighty kind!" exclaims Swift, "with a ——; less of civility and more of interest;" or as he puts it in one of his favourite "proverbs" soon afterwards—"my grandmother used to say,—

> More of your lining
> And less of your dining."

At last Swift, hearing that he was again to be passed over, gave a positive intimation that he would retire if nothing was done; adding that he should complain of Harley for nothing but neglecting to inform him sooner of the hopelessness of his position.[9] The dean of St. Patrick's was at

[9] April 13, 1713.

last promoted to a bishopric, and Swift appointed to the vacant deanery. The warrant was signed on April 23, and in June Swift set out to take possession of his deanery. It was no great prize; he would have to pay 1000*l.* for the house and fees, and thus, he says, it would be three years before he would be the richer for it; and, moreover, it involved what he already described as "banishment" to a country which he hated.

His state of mind when entering upon his preferment was painfully depressed. "At my first coming," he writes to Miss Vanhomrigh, "I thought I should have died with discontent; and was horribly melancholy while they were installing me; but it begins to wear off, and change to dulness." This depression is singular, when we remember that Swift was returning to the woman for whom he had the strongest affection, and from whom he had been separated for nearly three years; and moreover, that he was returning as a famous and a successful man. He seems to have been received with some disfavour by a society of Whig proclivities; he was suffering from a fresh return of ill-health; and besides the absence from the political struggles in which he was so keenly interested, he could not think of them without deep anxiety. He returned to London in October at the earnest request of political friends. Matters were looking serious; and though the journal to Stella was not again taken up, we can pretty well trace the events of the following period.

There can rarely have been a less congenial pair of colleagues than Harley and St. John. Their union was that of a still more brilliant, daring, and self-confident Disraeli with a very inferior edition of Sir Robert Peel, with smaller intellect and exaggerated infirmities. The timidity, procrastination, and "refinement" of the Trea-

surer were calculated to exasperate his audacious colleague. From the earliest period Swift had declared that everything depended upon the good mutual understanding of the two; he was frightened by every symptom of discord, and declares (in August, 1711) that he has ventured all his credit with the Ministers to remove their differences. He knew, as he afterwards said (October 20, 1711), that this was the way to be sent back to his willows at Laracor, but everything must be risked in such a case. When difficulties revived next year he hoped that he had made a reconciliation. But the discord was too vital. The victory of the Tories brought on a serious danger. They had come into power to make peace. They had made it. The next question was that of the succession of the crown. Here they neither reflected the general opinion of the nation nor were agreed amongst themselves. Harley, as we now know, had flirted with the Jacobites; and Bolingbroke was deep in treasonable plots. The existence of such plots was a secret to Swift, who indignantly denied their existence. When King hinted at a possible danger to Swift from the discovery of St. John's treason, he indignantly replied that he must have been "a most false and vile man" to join in anything of the kind.[1] He professes elsewhere his conviction that there were not at this period 500 Jacobites in England; and "amongst these not six of any quality or consequence."[2] Swift's sincerity, here as everywhere, is beyond all suspicion; but his conviction proves incidentally that he was in the dark as to the "wheels within wheels"—the backstairs plots, by which the administration of his friends was hampered and distracted. With so many causes for jealousy and

[1] Letter to King, Dec. 16th, 1716.

[2] *Inquiry into the Behaviour of the Queen's last Ministry.*

discord, it is no wonder that the political world became a mass of complex intrigue and dispute. The queen, meanwhile, might die at any moment, and some decided course of action become imperatively necessary. Whenever the queen was ill, said Harley, people were at their wits' end; as soon as she recovered they acted as if she were immortal. Yet, though he complained of the general indecision, his own conduct was most hopelessly undecided.

It was in the hopes of pacifying these intrigues that Swift was recalled from Ireland. He plunged into the fight, but not with his old success. Two pamphlets which he published at the end of 1713 are indications of his state of mind. One was an attack upon a wild no-popery shriek emitted by Bishop Burnet, whom he treats, says Johnson, "like one whom he is glad of an opportunity to insult." A man who, like Burnet, is on friendly terms with those who assail the privileges of his order must often expect such treatment from its zealous adherents. Yet the scornful assault, which finds out weak places enough in Burnet's mental rhetoric, is in painful contrast to the dignified argument of earlier pamphlets. The other pamphlet was an incident in a more painful contest. Swift had tried to keep on good terms with Addison and Steele. He had prevented Steele's dismissal from a Commissionership of Stamps. Steele, however, had lost his place of Gazetteer for an attack upon Harley. Swift persuaded Harley to be reconciled to Steele, on condition that Steele should apologize. Addison prevented Steele from making the required submission, "out of mere spite," says Swift, at the thought that Steele should require other help; rather, we guess, because Addison thought that the submission would savour of party infidelity. A coldness followed; "all our friendship is over," says Swift of Addison (March 6th, 1711); and

though good feeling revived between the principals, their intimacy ceased. Swift, swept into the ministerial vortex, pretty well lost sight of Addison; though they now and then met on civil terms. Addison dined with Swift and St. John upon April 3rd, 1713, and Swift attended a rehearsal of *Cato*—the only time when we see him at a theatre. Meanwhile the ill feeling to Steele remained, and bore bitter fruit.

Steele and Addison had to a great extent retired from politics, and during the eventful years 1711-12 were chiefly occupied in the politically harmless *Spectator*. But Steele was always ready to find vent for his zeal; and in 1713 he fell foul of the *Examiner* in the *Guardian*. Swift had long ceased to write *Examiners* or to be responsible for the conduct of the paper, though he still occasionally inspired the writers. Steele, naturally enough, supposed Swift to be still at work; and in defending a daughter of Steele's enemy, Nottingham, not only suggested that Swift was her assailant, but added an insinuation that Swift was an infidel. The imputation stung Swift to the quick. He had a sensibility to personal attacks, not rare with those who most freely indulge in them, which was ridiculed by the easy-going Harley. An attack from an old friend—from a friend whose good opinion he still valued, though their intimacy had ceased; from a friend, moreover, whom in spite of their separation he had tried to protect; and, finally, an attack upon the tenderest part of his character, irritated him beyond measure. Some angry letters passed, Steele evidently regarding Swift as a traitor, and disbelieving his professions of innocence and his claims to active kindness; whilst Swift felt Steele's ingratitude the more deeply from the apparent plausibility of the accusation. If Steele was

really unjust and ungenerous, we may admit as a partial excuse that in such cases the less prosperous combatant has a kind of right to bitterness. The quarrel broke out at the time of Swift's appointment to the deanery. Soon after the new dean's return to England, Steele was elected member for Stockbridge, and rushed into political controversy. His most conspicuous performance was a frothy and pompous pamphlet called the *Crisis*, intended to rouse alarms as to French invasion and Jacobite intrigues. Swift took the opportunity to revenge himself upon Steele. Two pamphlets —*The importance of the "Guardian" considered*, and *The Public Spirit of the Whigs* (the latter in answer to the *Crisis*)—are fierce attacks upon Steele personally and politically. Swift's feeling comes out sufficiently in a remark in the first. He reverses the saying about Cranmer, and says that he may affirm of Steele, "Do him a good turn, and he is your enemy for ever." There is vigorous writing enough, and effective ridicule of Steele's literary style and political alarmism. But it is painfully obvious, as in the attack upon Burnet, that personal animosity is now the predominant instead of an auxiliary feeling. Swift is anxious beyond all things to mortify and humiliate an antagonist. And he is in proportion less efficient as a partizan, though more amusing. He has, moreover, the disadvantage of being politically on the defensive. He is no longer proclaiming a policy, but endeavouring to disavow the policy attributed to his party. The wrath which breaks forth, and the bitter personality with which it is edged, were far more calculated to irritate his opponents than to disarm the lookers-on of their suspicions.

Part of the fury was no doubt due to the growing unsoundness of his political position. Steele in the beginning of 1714 was expelled from the House for the *Crisis;* and

an attack made upon Swift in the House of Lords for an incidental outburst against the hated Scots in his reply to the *Crisis*, was only staved off by a manœuvre of the ministry. Meanwhile Swift was urging the necessity of union upon men who hated each other more than they regarded any public cause whatever. Swift at last brought his two patrons together in Lady Masham's lodgings, and entreated them to be reconciled. If, he said, they would agree, all existing mischiefs could be remedied in two minutes. If they would not, the ministry would be ruined in two months. Bolingbroke assented: Oxford characteristically shuffled, said "all would be well," and asked Swift to dine with him next day. Swift, however, said that he would not stay to see the inevitable catastrophe. It was his natural instinct to hide his head in such moments; his intensely proud and sensitive nature could not bear to witness the triumph of his enemies, and he accordingly retired at the end of May, 1714, to the quiet parsonage of Upper Letcombe in Berkshire. The public wondered and speculated; friends wrote letters describing the scenes which followed, and desiring Swift's help; and he read, and walked, and chewed the cud of melancholy reflection, and thought of stealing away to Ireland. He wrote, however, a very remarkable pamphlet, giving his view of the situation, which was not published at the time; events went too fast.

Swift's conduct at this critical point is most noteworthy. The pamphlet (*Free Thoughts upon the Present State of Affairs*) exactly coincides with all his private and public utterances. His theory was simple and straightforward. The existing situation was the culminating result of Harley's policy of refinement and procrastination. Swift two years before had written a very able remonstrance

with the October Club, who had sought to push Harley into decisive measures; but though he preached patience, he really sympathized with their motives Instead of making a clean sweep of his opponents, Harley had left many of them in office, either from "refinement"—that over-subtlety of calculation which Swift thought inferior to plain common sense, and which, to use his favourite illustration, is like the sharp knife that mangles the paper, when a plain, blunt paper-knife cuts it properly—or else from inability to move the Queen, which he had foolishly allowed to pass for unwillingness, in order to keep up the appearance of power. Two things were now to be done; first, a clean sweep should be made of all Whigs and dissenters from office and from the army; secondly, the Court of Hanover should be required to break off all intercourse with the Opposition, on which condition the heir-presumptive (the infant Prince Frederick) might be sent over to reside in England. Briefly, Swift's policy was a policy of "thorough." Oxford's vacillations were the great obstacle, and Oxford was falling before the alliance of Bolingbroke with Lady Masham. Bolingbroke might have turned Swift's policy to the account of the Jacobites; but Swift did not take this into account, and in the *Free Thoughts* he declares his utter disbelief in any danger to the succession. What side, then, should he take? He sympathized with Bolingbroke's avowed principles. Bolingbroke was eager for his help, and even hoped to reconcile him to the red-haired duchess. But Swift was bound to Oxford by strong personal affection; by an affection which was not diminished even by the fact that Oxford had procrastinated in the matter of Swift's own preferment; and was, at this very moment, annoying him by delaying to pay the 1000*l.* incurred by his installation

in the deanery. To Oxford he had addressed (Nov. 21, 1713) a letter of consolation upon the death of a daughter, possessing the charm which is given to such letters only by the most genuine sympathy with the feelings of the loser, and by a spontaneous selection of the only safe topic—praise of the lost, equally tender and sincere. Every reference to Oxford is affectionate. When, at the beginning of July, Oxford was hastening to his fall, Swift wrote to him another manly and dignified letter, professing an attachment beyond the reach of external accidents of power and rank. The end came soon. Swift heard that Oxford was about to resign. He wrote at once (July 25, 1714) to propose to accompany him to his country house. Oxford replied two days later in a letter oddly characteristic. He begs Swift to come with him; "If I have not tired you *tête-à-tête*, fling away so much of your time upon one who loves you;" and then rather spoils the pathos by a bit of hopeless doggerel. Swift wrote to Miss Vanhomrigh on August 1. "I have been asked," he says, "to join with those people now in power; but I will not do it. I told Lord Oxford I would go with him, when he was out; and now he begs it of me, and I cannot refuse him. I meddle not with his faults, as he was a Minister of State; but you know his personal kindness to me was excessive; he distinguished and chose me above all other men, while he was great, and his letter to me the other day was the most moving imaginable."

An intimacy which bore such fruit in time of trial was not one founded upon a servility varnished by self-assertion. No stauncher friend than Swift ever lived. But his fidelity was not to be put to further proof. The day of the letter just quoted was the day of Queen Anne's death. The crash which followed ruined the "people now in

power" as effectually as Oxford. The party with which Swift had identified himself, in whose success all his hopes and ambitions were bound up, was not so much ruined as annihilated. "The Earl of Oxford," wrote Bolingbroke to Swift, "was removed on Tuesday. The Queen died on Sunday. What a world is this, and how does fortune banter us!"

CHAPTER VI.

STELLA AND VANESSA.

THE final crash of the Tory administration found Swift approaching the end of his forty-seventh year. It found him in his own opinion prematurely aged both in mind and body. His personal prospects and political hopes were crushed. "I have a letter from Dean Swift," says Arbuthnot in September; "he keeps up his noble spirit, and though like a man knocked down, you may behold him still with a stern countenance and aiming a blow at his adversaries." Yet his adversaries knew, and he knew only too well, that such blows as he could now deliver could at most show his wrath without gratifying his revenge. He was disarmed as well as "knocked down." He writes to Bolingbroke from Dublin in despair. "I live a country life in town," he says, "see nobody, and go every day once to prayers, and hope in a few months to grow as stupid as the present situation of affairs will require. Well, after all, parsons are not such bad company, especially when they are under subjection; and I let none but such come near me." Oxford, Bolingbroke, and Ormond were soon in exile or the tower; and a letter to Pope next year gives a sufficient picture of Swift's feelings. "You know," he said, "how well I loved both Lord Oxford and Bolingbroke, and how dear the Duke of

Ormond is to me; do you imagine I can be easy while their enemies are endeavouring to take off their heads?—*I nunc et versus tecum meditare canoros!*" "You are to understand," he says in conclusion, "that I live in the corner of a vast unfurnished house; my family consists of a steward, a groom, a helper in the stable, a footman, and an old maid, who are all at board wages, and when I do not dine abroad or make an entertainment (which last is very rare), I eat a mutton pie and drink half a pint of wine; my amusements are defending my small dominions against the archbishop, and endeavouring to reduce my rebellious choir. *Perditur hæc inter misero lux.*" In another of the dignified letters which show the finest side of his nature, he offered to join Oxford, whose intrepid behaviour, he says, "has astonished every one but me, who know you so well." But he could do nothing beyond showing sympathy; and he remained alone asserting his authority in his ecclesiastical domains, brooding over the past, and for the time unable to divert his thoughts into any less distressing channel. Some verses written in October "in sickness" give a remarkable expression of his melancholy,—

'Tis true—then why should I repine
To see my life so fast decline?
But why obscurely here alone
Where I am neither loved nor known?
My state of health none care to learn,
My life is here no soul's concern,
And those with whom I now converse
Without a tear will tend my hearse.

Yet we might have fancied that his lot would not be so unbearable. After all, a fall which ends in a deanery should break no bones. His friends, though hard pressed,

survived; and, lastly, was any one so likely to shed tears upon his hearse as the woman to whom he was finally returning? The answer to this question brings us to a story imperfectly known to us, but of vital importance in Swift's history.

We have seen in what masterful fashion Swift took possession of great men. The same imperious temper shows itself in his relations to women. He required absolute submission. Entrance into the inner circle of his affections could only be achieved by something like abasement; but all within it became as a part of himself, to be both cherished and protected without stint. His affectation of brutality was part of a system. On first meeting Lady Burlington at her husband's house, he ordered her to sing She declined. He replied, "Sing, or I will make you. Why, madam, I suppose you take me for one of your English hedge-parsons; sing when I tell you." She burst into tears and retired. The next time he met her he began, "Pray, madam, are you as proud and ill-natured as when I saw you last?" She good-humouredly gave in, and Swift became her warm friend. Another lady to whom he was deeply attached was a famous beauty, Anne Long. A whimsical treaty was drawn up, setting forth that "the said Dr. Swift, upon the score of his merit and extraordinary qualities, doth claim the sole and undoubted right that all persons whatever shall make such advance to him as he pleases to demand, any law, claim, custom, privilege of sex, beauty, fortune or quality to the contrary notwithstanding;" and providing that Miss Long shall cease the contumacy in which she has been abetted by the Vanhomrighs, but be allowed in return, in consideration of her being "a Lady of the Toast," to give herself the reputation of being one of Swift's acquaintance. Swift's affection for

Miss Long is touchingly expressed in private papers, and in a letter written upon her death in retirement and poverty. He intends to put up a monument to her memory, and wrote a notice of her, "to serve her memory," and also, as he characteristically adds, to spite the brother who had neglected her. Years afterwards he often refers to the "edict" which he annually issued in England, commanding all ladies to make him the first advances. He graciously makes an exception in favour of the Duchess of Queensberry, though he observes incidentally that he now hates all people whom he cannot command. This humorous assumption, like all Swift's humour, has a strong element of downright earnest. He gives whimsical prominence to a genuine feeling. He is always acting the part of despot, and acting it very gravely. When he stays at Sir Arthur Acheson's, Lady Acheson becomes his pupil, and is "severely chid" when she reads wrong. Mrs. Pendarves, afterwards Mrs. Delany, says in the same way that Swift calls himself "her master," and corrects her when she speaks bad English.[1] He behaved in the same way to his servants. Delany tells us that he was "one of the best masters in the world," paid his servants the highest rate of wages known, and took great pains to encourage and help them to save. But, on engaging them, he always tested their humility. One of their duties, he told them, would be to take turns in cleaning the scullion's shoes, and if they objected, he sent them about their business. He is said to have tested a curate's docility in the same way by offering him sour wine. His dominion was most easily extended over women; and a long list might be easily made out of the feminine

[1] *Autobiography*, i. 407.

favourites who at all periods of his life were in more or less intimate relations with this self-appointed sultan. From the wives of peers and the daughters of lord-lieutenants down to Dublin tradeswomen with a taste for rhyming, and even scullerymaids with no tastes at all, a whole hierarchy of female slaves bowed to his rule, and were admitted into higher and lower degrees of favour.

Esther Johnson, or Stella—to give her the name which she did not receive until after the period of the famous journals—was one of the first of these worshippers. As we have seen, he taught her to write, and when he went to Laracor, she accepted the peculiar position already described. We have no direct statement of their mutual feelings before the time of the journal; but one remarkable incident must be noticed. During his stay in England in 1703-4 Swift had some correspondence with a Dublin clergyman named Tisdall. He afterwards regarded Tisdall with a contempt which, for the present, is only half perceptible in some good-humoured raillery. Tisdall's intimacy with "the ladies," Stella and Mrs. Dingley, is one topic, and in the last of Swift's letters we find that Tisdall has actually made an offer for Stella. Swift had replied in a letter (now lost), which Tisdall called unfriendly, unkind, and unaccountable. Swift meets these reproaches coolly, contemptuously, and straightforwardly. He will not affect unconsciousness of Tisdall's meaning. Tisdall obviously takes him for a rival in Stella's affections. Swift replies that he will tell the naked truth. The truth is that "if his fortune and humour served him to think of that state" (marriage) he would prefer Stella to any one on earth. So much, he says, he has declared to Tisdall before. He did not, however, think of his affection as an obstacle to Tisdall's hopes. Tisdall

had been too poor to marry; but the offer of a living has removed that objection; and Swift undertakes to act what he has hitherto acted, a friendly though passive part. He had thought, he declares, that the affair had gone too far to be broken off; he had always spoken of Tisdall in friendly terms; "no consideration of my own misfortune in losing so good a friend and companion as her" shall prevail upon him to oppose the match, "since it is held so necessary and convenient a thing for ladies to marry, and that time takes off from the lustre of virgins in all other eyes but mine."

The letter must have suggested some doubts to Tisdall. Swift alleges as his only reasons for not being a rival in earnest his "humour" and the state of his fortune. The last obstacle might be removed at any moment. Swift's prospects, though deferred, were certainly better than Tisdall's. Unless, therefore, the humour was more insurmountable than is often the case, Swift's coolness was remarkable or ominous. It may be that, as some have held, there was nothing behind. But another possibility undoubtedly suggests itself. Stella had received Tisdall's suit so unfavourably that it was now suspended, and that it finally failed. Stella was corresponding with Swift. It is easy to guess that between the "unaccountable" letter and the contemptuous letter, Swift had heard something from Stella, which put him thoroughly at ease in regard to Tisdall's attentions.

We have no further information until, seven years afterwards, we reach the *Journal to Stella*, and find ourselves overhearing the "little language." The first editors scrupled at a full reproduction of what might strike an unfriendly reader as almost drivelling; and Mr. Forster reprinted for the first time the omitted

parts of the still accessible letters. The little language is a continuation of Stella's infantile prattle. Certain letters are a cipher for pet names which may be conjectured. Swift calls himself Pdfr, or Podefar, meaning, as Mr. Forster guesses, "Poor, dear Foolish Rogue." Stella, or rather Esther Johnson, is Ppt, say "Poppet." MD, "my dear," means Stella, and sometimes includes Mrs. Dingley. FW means "farewell," or "foolish wenches;" Lele is taken by Mr. Forster to mean "truly" or "lazy," or "there, there," or to have "other meanings not wholly discoverable." The phrases come in generally by way of leave-taking. "So I got into bed," he says, "to write to MD, MD, for we must always write to MD, MD, MD, awake or asleep;" and he ends, "Go to bed. Help pdfr. Rove pdfr, MD, MD. Nite darling rogues." Here is another scrap, "I assure oo it im vely late now; but zis goes to-morrow; and I must have time to converse with own deerichar MD. Nite de deer Sollahs." One more leave-taking may be enough. "Farewell, dearest hearts and souls, MD. Farewell, MD, MD, MD. FW, FW, FW. ME, ME. Lele, Lele, Lele, Sollahs, Lele."

The reference to the Golden Farmer already noted is in the words, "I warrant oo don't remember the Golden Farmer neither, Figgarkick Solly," and I will venture to a guess at what Mr. Forster pronounces to be inexplicable.[2] May not Solly be the same as "Sollah," generally interpreted by the editors as "sirrah;" and "Figgarkick" possibly be the same as Pilgarlick, a phrase which he elsewhere applies to Stella,[3] and which the dictionaries say means "poor, deserted creature"?

[2] *Foster*, p. 108.

[3] Oct. 20th, 1711. The last use I have observed of this word is

Swift says that as he writes his language he "makes up his mouth just as if he was speaking it." It fits the affectionate caresses in which he is always indulging. Nothing, indeed, can be more charming than the playful little prattle which occasionally interrupts the gossip and the sharp utterances of hope or resentment. In the snatches of leisure, late at night or before he has got up in the morning, he delights in an imaginary chat; for a few minutes of little fondling talk help him to forget his worries, and anticipate the happiness of reunion. He caresses her letters, as he cannot touch her hand. "And now let us come and see what this saucy, dear letter of MD says. Come out, letter, come out from between the sheets; here it is underneath, and it will not come out. Come out again, I says; so there. Here it is. What says Pdf to me, pray? says it. Come and let me answer for you to your ladies. Hold up your head then like a good letter." And so he begins a little talk, and prays that they may be never separated again for ten days, whilst he lives. Then he follows their movements in Dublin in passages which give some lively little pictures of their old habits. "And where will you go to-day? for I cannot be with you for the ladies." [He is off sight-seeing to the Tower and Bedlam with Lady Kerry and a friend.] "It is a rainy, ugly day; I would have you send for Wales, and go to the dean's; but do not play small games when you lose. You will be ruined by Manilio, Basto, the queen, and two small trumps in red. I confess it is a good hand against the player. But, then, there are Spadilio, Punto, the king, strong trumps against you, which with one rump more are three tricks ten ace;

in a letter of Carlyle's, Nov. 7th, 1824. "Strange pilgarlic-looking figures" Froude's *Life of Carlyle*, i. 247.

for suppose you play your Manilio—O, silly, how I prate and cannot get away from MD in a morning. Go, get you gone, dear naughty girls, and let me rise." He delights again in turning to account his queer talent for making impromptu proverbs,—

> Be you lords or be you earls,
> You must write to naughty girls.

Or again,—

> Mr. White and Mr. Red
> Write to M.D. when abed:
> Mr. Black and Mr. Brown
> Write to M.D. when you are down:
> Mr. Oak and Mr. Willow
> Write to M.D. on your pillow.

And here is one more for the end of the year,—

> Would you answer M.D.'s letter
> On New Year's Day you will do it better:
> For when the year with M.D. 'gins
> It without M.D never 'lins.

"These proverbs," he explains, "have always old words in them; *lin* is leave off."

> But if on new year you write nones
> M.D. then will bang your bones.

Reading these fond triflings we feel even now as though we were unjustifiably prying into the writer's confidence. What are we to say to them? We might simply say that the tender playfulness is charming; and that it is delightful to find the stern gladiator turning from party-warfare to soothe his wearied soul with these tender caresses. There is but one drawback. Macaulay imitates some of this prattle in his charming letters to his younger sister,

and there we can accept it without difficulty. But Stella was not Swift's younger sister. She was a beautiful and clever woman of thirty, when he was in the prime of his powers at forty-four. If Tisdall could have seen the journal he would have ceased to call Swift "unaccountable." Did all this caressing suggest nothing to Stella? Swift does not write as an avowed lover; Dingley serves as a chaperone even in these intimate confidences; and yet a word or two escapes which certainly reads like something more than fraternal affection. He apologizes (May 23, 1711) for not returning; "I will say no more, but beg you to be easy till fortune takes her course, and to believe that MD's felicity is the great goal I aim at in all my pursuits." If such words addressed under such circumstances did not mean "I hope to make you my wife as soon as I get a deanery," there must have been some distinct understanding to limit their force.

But another character enters the drama. Mrs. Vanhomrigh,[4] a widow rich enough to mix in good society, was living in London with two sons and two daughters, and made Swift's acquaintance in 1708. Her eldest daughter, Hester, was then seventeen, or about ten years younger than Stella. When Swift returned to London in 1710, he took lodgings close to the Vanhomrighs, and became an intimate of the family. In the daily reports of his dinner, the name Van occurs more frequently than any other. Dinner, let us observe in passing, had not then so much as now the character of a solemn religious rite, implying a formal invitation. The ordinary hour was three (though Harley with his usual procrastination often failed to sit down till six), and Swift, when not pre-engaged, looked

[4] Lord Orrery instructs us to pronounce this name Vanummery.

in at Court or elsewhere in search of an invitation. He seldom failed: and when nobody else offered he frequently went to the "Vans." The name of the daughter is only mentioned two or three times; whilst it is perhaps a suspicious circumstance that he very often makes a quasi-apology for his dining-place. "I was so lazy I dined where my new gown was, at Mrs. Vanhomrigh's," he says, in May, 1711; and a day or two later explains that he keeps his "best gown and periwig" there whilst he is lodging at Chelsea, and often dines there "out of mere listlessness." The phrase may not have been consciously insincere; but Swift was drifting into an intimacy which Stella could hardly approve, and, if she desired Swift's love, would regard as ominous. When Swift took possession of his deanery, he revealed his depression to Miss Vanhomrigh, who about this time took the title Vanessa; and Vanessa again received his confidences from Letcombe. A full account of their relations is given in the remarkable poem called *Cadenus and Vanessa*, less remarkable, indeed, as a poem than as an autobiographical document. It is singularly characteristic of Swift that we can use what, for want of a better classification, must be called a love poem, as though it were an affidavit in a law-suit. Most men would feel some awkwardness in hinting at sentiments conveyed by Swift in the most downright terms; to turn them into a poem would seem preposterous. Swift's poetry, however, is always plain matter of fact, and we may read *Cadenus* (which means of course *Decanus*) *and Vanessa* as Swift's deliberate and palpably sincere account of his own state of mind. Omitting a superfluous framework of mythology in the contemporary taste, we have a plain story of the relations of this new Heloïse and Abelard. Vanessa, he tells us, united

masculine accomplishments to feminine grace; the fashionable fops (I use Swift's own words as much as possible) who tried to entertain her with the tattle of the day, stared when she replied by applications of Plutarch's morals; the ladies from the purlieus of St. James's found her reading Montaigne at her toilet, and were amazed by her ignorance of the fashions. Both were scandalized at the waste of such charms and talents due to the want of so called knowledge of the world. Meanwhile, Vanessa, not yet twenty, met and straightway admired Cadenus, though his eyes were dim with study and his health decayed. He had grown old in politics and wit; was caressed by ministers; dreaded and hated by half mankind, and had forgotten the arts by which he had once charmed ladies, though merely for amusement and to show his wit.[5] He did not understand what was love; he behaved to Vanessa as a father might behave to a daughter;

> That innocent delight he took
> To see the virgin mind her book
> Was but the master's secret joy
> In school to hear the finest boy.

Vanessa, once the quickest of learners, grew distracted. He apologized for having bored her by his pedantry, and offered a last adieu. She then startled him by a confession. He had taught her, she said, that virtue should never be afraid of disclosures; that noble minds were above common maxims (just what he had said to Varina), and she therefore told him frankly that his lessons, aimed at her head, had reached her heart. Cadenus was utterly taken aback. Her words were too plain to be in jest.

[5] This simply repeats what he says in his first published letters about his flirtations at Leicester.

He was conscious of having never for a moment meant to be other than a teacher. Yet every one would suspect him of intentions to win her heart and her five thousand pounds. He tried not to take things seriously. Vanessa, however, became eloquent. She said that he had taught her to love great men through their books; why should she not love the living reality? Cadenus was flattered and half converted. He had never heard her talk so well, and admitted that she had a most unfailing judgment and discerning head. He still maintained that his dignity and age put love out of the question, but he offered in return as much friendship as she pleased. She replies that she will now become tutor and teach him the lesson which he is so slow to learn. But—and here the revelation ends—

> But what success Vanessa met
> Is to the world a secret yet.[6]

Vanessa loved Swift; and Swift, it seems, allowed himself to be loved. One phrase in a letter written to him during his stay at Dublin, in 1713, suggests the only hint of jealousy. If you are happy, she says, "it is ill-natured of you not to tell me so, except 'tis what is inconsistent with mine." Soon after Swift's final retirement to Ireland, Mrs. Vanhomrigh died; her husband had left a small property at Celbridge. One son was dead; the other behaved badly to his sisters; the daughters were for a time in money difficulties, and it

[6] The passage which contains this line was said by Orrery to cast an unmanly insinuation against Vanessa's virtue. As the accusation has been repeated, it is perhaps right to say that one fact sufficiently disproves its possibility. The poem was intended for Vanessa alone; and would never have appeared had it not been published after her death by her own direction.

became convenient for them to retire to Ireland, where Vanessa ultimately settled at Celbridge. The two women who worshipped Swift were thus almost in presence of each other. The situation almost suggests comedy; but unfortunately it was to take a most tragical and still partly mysterious development.

The fragmentary correspondence between Swift and Vanessa establishes certain facts. Their intercourse was subject to restraints. He begs her, when he is starting for Dublin, to get her letters directed by some other hand, and to write nothing that may not be seen, for fear of "inconveniences." The post-office clerk surely would not be more attracted by Vanessa's hand than by that of such a man as Lewis, a subordinate of Harley's who had formerly forwarded her letters. He adds that if she comes to Ireland, he will see her very seldom. "It is not a place for freedom, but everything is known in a week and magnified a hundred times." Poor Vanessa soon finds the truth of this. She complains that she is amongst "strange prying deceitful people;" that he flies her and will give no reason except that they are amongst fools and must submit. His reproofs are terrible to her. "If you continue to treat me as you do," she says soon after, "you will not be made uneasy by me long." She would rather have borne the rack than those "killing, killing words" of his. She writes instead of speaking, because when she ventures to complain in person "you are angry, and there is something in your look so awful that it shakes me dumb"—a memorable phrase in days soon to come. She protests that she says as little as she can. If he knew what she thought, he must be moved. The letter containing these phrases is dated 1714, and there are but a few scraps till 1720; we gather that Vanessa submitted partly to the

necessities of the situation: and that this extreme tension was often relaxed. Yet she plainly could not resign herself or suppress her passion. Two letters in 1720 are painfully vehement. He has not seen her for ten long weeks, she says in her first, and she has only had one letter and one little note with an excuse. She will sink under his "prodigious neglect." Time or accident cannot lessen her inexpressible passion. "Put my passion under the utmost restraint; send me as distant from you as the earth will allow, yet you cannot banish those charming ideas which will stick by me, whilst I have the use of memory. Nor is the love I bear you only seated in my soul, for there is not a single atom of my frame that is not blended with it." She thinks him changed, and entreats him not to suffer her to "live a life like a languishing death, which is the only life I can lead, if you have lost any of your tenderness for me." The following letter is even more passionate. She passes days in sighing and nights in watching and thinking of one who thinks not of her. She was born with "violent passions, which terminate all in one, that inexpressible passion I have for you." If she could guess at his thoughts, which is impossible ("for never any one living thought like you") she would guess that he wishes her "religious"—that she might pay her devotions to heaven. "But that should not spare you, for was I an enthusiast, still you'd be the deity I should worship." "What marks are there of a deity but what you are to be known by—you are (at?) present everywhere; your dear image is always before my eyes. Sometimes you strike me with that prodigious awe, I tremble with fear; at other times a charming compassion shines through your countenance, which moves my soul. Is it not more reasonable

to adore a radiant form one has seen, than one only described?"[7]

The man who received such letters from a woman whom he at least admired and esteemed, who felt that to respond was to administer poison, and to fail to respond was to inflict the severest pangs, must have been in the cruellest of dilemmas. Swift, we cannot doubt, was grieved and perplexed. His letters imply embarrassment; and, for the most part, take a lighter tone; he suggests his universal panacea of exercise; tells her to fly from the spleen instead of courting it; to read diverting books, and so forth; advice more judicious probably than comforting. There are, however, some passages of a different tendency. There is a mutual understanding to use certain catch-words, which recall the "little language." He wishes that her letters were as hard to read as his, in case of accident. "A stroke thus . . . signifies everything that may be said to *Cad*, at the beginning and conclusion." And she uses this written caress, and signs herself—his own "Skinage." There are certain "questions," to which reference is occasionally made; a kind of catechism, it seems, which he was expected to address to himself at intervals, and the nature of which must be conjectured. He proposes to continue the *Cadenus and Vanessa*—a proposal which makes her happy beyond "expression,"—and delights her by recalling a number of available incidents. He recurs to them in his last letter, and bids her "go over the scenes of Windsor, Cleveland Row, Rider Street, St. James's Street, Kensington, the

[7] Compare Pope's *Eloisa* to *Abelard* which appeared in 1717. If Vanessa had read it, she might almost be suspected of borrowing; but her phrases seem to be too genuine to justify the hypothesis.

Shrubbery, the Colonel in France, &c. Cad thinks often of these, especially on horseback,[8] as I am assured." This prosaic list of names recall, as we find, various old meetings. And, finally, one letter contains an avowal of a singular kind. "Soyez assurée," he says, after advising her "to quit this scoundrel island," "que jamais personne du monde a èté aimée, honorée, estimée, adorée par votre ami que vous." It seems as though he were compelled to throw her just a crumb of comfort here: but, in the same breath, he has begged her to leave him for ever.

If Vanessa was ready to accept a "gown of forty-four," to overlook his infirmities in consideration of his fame, why should Swift have refused? Why condemn her to undergo this "languishing death,"—a long agony of unrequited passion? One answer is suggested by the report that Swift was secretly married to Stella in 1716. The fact is not proved, nor disproved:[9] nor, to my mind, is

[8] Scott appropriately quotes Hotspur. The phrase is apparently a hint at Swift's usual recipe of exercise.

[9] I cannot here discuss the evidence. The original statements are in *Orrery*, p. 22 &c.; *Delany*, p. 52; *Dean Swift*, p. 93; *Sheridan*, p. 282; *Monck Berkeley*, p. xxxvi. Scott accepted the marriage, and the evidence upon which he relied was criticized by Monck Mason, p. 297, &c. Monck Mason makes some good points, and especially diminishes the value of the testimony of Bishop Berkeley, showing by dates that he could not have heard the story, as his grandson affirms, from Bishop Ashe, who is said to have performed the ceremony. It probably came, however, from Berkeley, who, we may add, was tutor to Ashe's son, and had special reasons for interest in the story. On the whole, the argument for the marriage comes to this: that it was commonly reported by the end of Swift's life, that it was certainly believed by his intimate friend Delany, in all probability by the elder Sheridan and by Mrs. Whiteway. Mrs. Sican, who told the story to Sheridan, seems also to be a good witness. On the other hand, Dr. Lyon, a clergyman who was one of Swift's guardians in his imbecility, says that

the question of its truth of much importance. The ceremony, if performed, was nothing but a ceremony. The only rational explanation of the fact, if it be taken for a fact, must be that Swift, having resolved not to marry, gave Stella this security that he would, at least, marry no one else. Though his anxiety to hide the connexion with Vanessa may only mean a dread of idle tongues, it is at least highly probable that Stella was the person from whom he specially desired to keep it. Yet his poetical addresses to Stella upon her birthday (of which the first is dated 1719, and the last 1727) are clearly not the addresses of a lover. Both in form and substance they are even pointedly intended to express friendship instead of love. They read like an expansion of his avowal to Tisdall, that her charms for him, though for no one else, could not be diminished by her growing old without marriage. He addresses her with blunt affection, and tells her plainly of her growing size and waning beauty; comments even upon her defects of temper, and seems expressly to deny that he loved her in the usual way.

> Thou, Stella, wert no longer young
> When first for thee my harp I strung,
> Without one word of Cupid's darts
> Of killing eyes and bleeding hearts;
> With friendship and esteem possess'd
> I ne'er admitted love a guest.

We may almost say that he harps upon the theme of "friendship and esteem." His gratitude for her care of him is pathetically expressed; he admires her with the

it was denied by Mrs. Dingley and by Mrs. Brent, Swift's old housekeeper, and by Stella's executors. The evidence seems to me very indecisive. Much of it may be dismissed as mere gossip, but a certain probability remains.

devotion of a brother for the kindest of sisters; his plain prosaic lines become poetical, or perhaps something better; but there is an absence of the lover's strain which is only not, if not, ostentatious.

The connexion with Stella, whatever its nature, gives the most intelligible explanation of his keeping Vanessa at a distance. A collision between his two slaves might be disastrous. And, as the story goes (for we are everywhere upon uncertain ground), it came. In 1721 poor Vanessa had lost her only sister,[1] and companion: her brothers were already dead, and, in her solitude, she would naturally be more than ever eager for Swift's kindness. At last, in 1723, she wrote (it is said) a letter to Stella, and asked whether she was Swift's wife.[2] Stella replied that she was, and forwarded Vanessa's letter to Swift. How Swift could resent an attempt to force his wishes, has been seen in the letter to Varina. He rode in a fury to Celbridge. His countenance, says Orrery, could be terribly expressive of the sterner passions. Prominent eyes—"azure as the heavens" (says Pope)—arched by bushy black eyebrows, could glare, we can believe from his portraits, with the green fury of a cat's. Vanessa had spoken of the "something awful in his looks," and of his killing words. He now entered her room, silent with rage, threw down her letter on the table and rode off. He had struck Vanessa's death-blow. She died soon afterwards, but lived long enough to revoke a will made in favour of Swift, and leave her money between Judge Marshal and the famous Bishop Berkeley. Berkeley, it seems, had only seen her once in his life.

[1] *Monck Mason*, p. 310, note.

[2] This is Sheridan's story. Orrery speaks of the letter as written to Swift himself.

The story of the last fatal interview has been denied. Vanessa's death, though she was under thirty-five, is less surprising when we remember that her younger sister and both her brothers had died before her; and that her health had always been weak, and her life for some time a languishing death. That there was in any case a terribly tragic climax to the half-written romance of *Cadenus and Vanessa* is certain. Vanessa requested that the poem and the letters might be published by her executors. Berkeley suppressed the letters for the time; and they were not published in full until Scott's edition of Swift's works.

Whatever the facts, Swift had reasons enough for bitter regret if not for deep remorse. He retired to hide his head in some unknown retreat; absolute seclusion was the only solace to his gloomy, wounded spirit. After two months he returned to resume his retired habits. A period, followed, as we shall see in the next chapter, of fierce political excitement. For a time too he had a vague hope of escaping from his exile. An astonishing literary success increased his reputation. But another misfortune approached which crushed all hope of happiness in life.

In 1726 Swift at last revisited England. He writes in July that he has for two months been anxious about Stella's health, and as usual feared the worst. He has seen through the disguises of a letter from Mrs. Dingley. His heart is so sunk that he will never be the same man again, but drag on a wretched life till it pleases God to call him away. Then in an agony of distress he contemplates her death; he says that he could not bear to be present; he should be a trouble to her, and the greatest torment to himself. He forces himself to add that her death must

not take place at the deanery. He will not return to find her just dead or dying. "Nothing but extremity could make me so familiar with those terrible words applied to so dear a friend." "I think," he says in another letter, "that there is not a greater folly than that of entering into too strict a partnership or friendship with the loss of which a man must be absolutely miserable; but especially [when the loss occurs] at an age when it is too late to engage in a new friendship." The morbid feeling which could withhold a man from attending a friend's deathbed, or allow him to regret the affection to which his pain was due, is but too characteristic of Swift's egoistic attachments. Yet we forgive the rash phrase, when we read his passionate expressions of agony. Swift returned to Ireland in the autumn, and Stella struggled through the winter. He was again in England in the following summer; and for a time in better spirits. But once more the news comes that Stella is probably on her deathbed; and he replies in letters which we read as we listen to groans of a man in sorest agony. He keeps one letter for an hour before daring to open it. He does not wish to live to see the loss of the person for whose sake alone life was worth preserving. "What have I to do in the world? I never was in such agonies as when I received your letter, and had it in my pocket. I am able to hold up my sorry head no longer." In another distracted letter, he repeats in Latin the desire that Stella shall not die in the deanery, for fear of malignant misinterpretations. If any marriage had taken place, the desire to conceal it had become a rooted passion.

Swift returned to Ireland to find Stella still living. It is said that in the last period of her life Swift offered to make the marriage public, and that she declined, saying

that it was now too late.[3] She lingered till January 28, 1728. He sat down the same night to write a few scattered reminiscences. He breaks down; and writes again during the funeral, which he is too ill to attend. The fragmentary notes give us the most authentic account of Stella, and show, at least, what she appeared in the eyes of her lifelong friend and protector. We may believe that she was intelligent and charming; as we can be certain that Swift loved her in every sense but one. A lock of her hair was preserved in an envelope in which he had written one of those vivid phrases by which he still lives in our memory: "*Only a woman's hair.*" What does it mean? Our interpretation will depend partly upon what we can see ourselves in a lock of hair. But I think that any one who judges Swift fairly will read in those four words the most intense utterance of tender affection, and of pathetic yearning for the irrevocable past strangely blended with a bitterness springing not from remorse, but indignation at the cruel tragi-comedy of life. The destinies laugh at us whilst they torture us; they make cruel scourges of trifles, and extract the bitterest passion from our best affections.

Swift was left alone. Before we pass on we must briefly touch the problems of this strange history. It was a natural guess that some mysterious cause condemned Swift to his loneliness. A story is told by Scott (on poor evidence) that Delany went to Archbishop King's library about the time of the supposed marriage. As he entered

[3] Scott heard this from Mrs. Whiteway's grandson. Sheridan tells the story as though Stella had begged for publicity, and Swift cruelly refused. Delany's statement (p. 56), which agrees with Mrs. Whiteway's, appears to be on good authority, and, if true, proves the reality of the marriage.

Swift rushed out with a distracted countenance. King was in tears, and said to Delany, "You have just met the most unhappy man on earth; but on the subject of his wretchedness you must never ask a question." This has been connected with a guess made by somebody that Swift had discovered Stella to be his natural sister. It can be shown conclusively that this is impossible; and the story must be left as picturesque but too hopelessly vague to gratify any inference whatever. We know without it that Swift was unhappy; but we know nothing of any definite cause.

Another view is that there is no mystery. Swift, it is said, retained through life the position of Stella's "guide, philosopher and friend," and was never anything more. Stella's address to Swift (on his birthday, 1721), may be taken to confirm this theory. It says with a plainness like his own that he had taught her to despise beauty and hold her empire by virtue and sense. Yet the theory is in itself strange. The less love entered into Swift's relations to Stella, the more difficult to explain his behaviour to Vanessa. If he regarded Stella only as a daughter or a younger sister, and she returned the same feeling, he had no reason for making any mystery about the woman who would not in that case be a rival. If, again, we accept this view, we naturally ask why Swift "never admitted love a guest." He simply continued, it is suggested, to behave as teacher to pupil. He thought of her when she was a woman as he had thought of her when she was a child of eight years old. But it is singular that a man should be able to preserve such a relation. It is quite true that a connexion of this kind may blind a man to its probable consequences; but it is contrary to ordinary experience that

it should render the consequences less probable. The relation might explain why Swift should be off his guard; but could hardly act as a safeguard. An ordinary man who was on such terms with a beautiful girl as are revealed in the *Journal to Stella* would have ended by falling in love with her. Why did not Swift? We can only reply by remembering the "coldness" of temper to which he refers in his first letter: and his assertion that he did not understand love, and that his frequent flirtations never meant more than a desire for distraction. The affair with Varina is an exception: but there are grounds for holding that Swift was constitutionally indisposed to the passion of love. The absence of any traces of such a passion from writings conspicuous for their amazing sincerity, and (it is added) for their freedoms of another kind, has been often noticed as a confirmation of this hypothesis. Yet it must be said that Swift could be strictly reticent about his strongest feelings—and was specially cautious, for whatever reason, in regard to his relation with Stella.[4]

If Swift constitutionally differed from other men, we have some explanation of his strange conduct. But we must take into account other circumstances. Swift had very obvious motives for not marrying. In the first place, he gradually became almost a monomaniac upon the question of money. His hatred of wasting a penny unnecessarily began at Trinity College, and is prominent in all his letters and journals. It coloured even his politics, for a conviction that the nation was hopelessly ruined is one of his strongest prejudices. He kept accounts down to halfpence, and rejoices at every saving

[4] Besides Scott's remarks (see v. of his life) see Orrery, *Letter* 10; *Deane Swift*, p. 93, *Sheridan*, p. 297.

of a shilling. The passion was not the vulgar desire for wealth of the ordinary miser. It sprang from the conviction stored up in all his aspirations that money meant independence. "Wealth," he says, "is liberty; and liberty is a blessing fittest for a philosopher—and Gay is a slave just by two thousand pounds too little."[5] Gay was a duchess's lapdog: Swift, with all his troubles, at least a free man. Like all Swift's prejudices, this became a fixed idea which was always gathering strength. He did not love money for its own sake. He was even magnificent in his generosity. He scorned to receive money for his writings; he abandoned the profit to his printers in compensation for the risks they ran, or gave it to his friends. His charity was splendid relatively to his means. In later years he lived on a third of his income, gave away a third, and saved the remaining third for his posthumous charity,[6]—and posthumous charity which involves present saving is charity of the most unquestionable kind. His principle was that by reducing his expenditure to the lowest possible point, he secured his independence and could then make a generous use of the remainder. Until he had received his deanery, however, he could only make both ends meet. Marriage would therefore have meant poverty, probably dependence, and the complete sacrifice of his ambition.

If under these circumstances Swift had become engaged to Stella upon Temple's death, he would have been doing what was regularly done by fellows of colleges under the old system. There is, however, no trace of such an engagement. It would be in keeping with Swift's character, if we should suppose that he shrank from the

[5] *Letter to Pope*, July 16th, 1728. [6] *Sheridan*, p. 23.

bondage of an engagement; that he designed to marry Stella as soon as he should achieve a satisfactory position, and meanwhile trusted to his influence over her, and thought that he was doing her justice by leaving her at liberty to marry if she chose. The close connexion must have been injurious to Stella's prospects of a match; but it continued only by her choice. If this were in fact the case, it is still easy to understand why Swift did not marry upon becoming dean. He felt himself, I have said, to be a broken man. His prospects were ruined, and his health precarious. This last fact requires to be remembered in every estimate of Swift's character. His life was passed under a Damocles' sword. He suffered from a distressing illness which he attributed to an indigestion produced by an over-consumption of fruit at Temple's when he was a little over twenty-one. The main symptoms were a giddiness, which frequently attacked him, and was accompanied by deafness. It is quite recently that the true nature of the complaint has been identified. Dr. Bucknill[7] seems to prove that the symptoms are those of "Labyrinthine vertigo," or Ménière's disease, so called because discovered by Ménière in 1861. The references to his sufferings, brought together by Sir William Wilde in 1849,[8] are frequent in all his writings. It tormented him for days, weeks, and months, gradually becoming more permanent in later years. In 1731 he tells Gay that his giddiness attacks him constantly, though it is less violent than of old; and in 1736 he says that it is continual. From a much earlier period it had alarmed and distressed him. Some pathetic entries are given by Mr. Forster from one of his note-books:—"Dec. 5 (1708).

[7] *Brain* for Jan., 1882.

[8] *Closing Years of Dean Swift's Life.*

—Horribly sick. 12th.—Much better, thank God and M.D.'s prayers. . . . April 2nd (1709).—Small giddy fit and swimming in the head. M.D. and God help me. . . . July, 1710.—Terrible fit. God knows what may be the event. Better towards the end." The terrible anxiety, always in the background, must count for much in Swift's gloomy despondency. Though he seems always to have spoken of the fruit as the cause, he must have had misgivings as to the nature and result. Dr. Bucknill tells us that it was not necessarily connected with the disease of the brain, which ultimately came upon him; but he may well have thought that this disorder of the head was prophetic of such an end. It was probably in 1717 that he said to Young of the *Night Thoughts*, "I shall be like that tree; I shall die at the top." A man haunted perpetually by such forebodings might well think that marriage was not for him. In *Cadenus and Vanessa* he insists upon his declining years with an emphasis which seems excessive even from a man of forty-four (in 1713 he was really forty-five) to a girl of twenty. In a singular poem called the *Progress of Marriage* he treats the supposed case of a divine of fifty-two marrying a lively girl of fashion, and speaks with his usual plainness of the probable consequences of such folly. We cannot doubt that here as elsewhere he is thinking of himself. He was fifty-two when receiving the passionate love-letters of Vanessa; and the poem seems to be specially significant.

This is one of those cases in which we feel that even biographers are not omniscient; and I must leave it to my readers to choose their own theory, only suggesting that readers too are fallible. But we may still ask what judgment is to be passed upon Swift's conduct. Both Stella and Vanessa suffered from coming within the sphere of Swift's

imperious attraction. Stella enjoyed his friendship through her life at the cost of a partial isolation from ordinary domestic happiness. She might and probably did regard his friendship as a full equivalent for the sacrifice. It is one of the cases in which, if the actors be our contemporaries, we hold that outsiders are incompetent to form a judgment, as none but the principals can really know the facts. Is it better to be the most intimate friend of a man of genius or the wife of a commonplace Tisdall? If Stella chose, and chose freely, it is hard to say that she was mistaken, or to blame Swift for a fascination which he could not but exercise. The tragedy of Vanessa suggests rather different reflections. Swift's duty was plain. Granting what seems to be probable, that Vanessa's passion took him by surprise, and that he thought himself disqualified for marriage by infirmity and weariness of life, he should have made his decision perfectly plain. He should have forbidden any clandestine relations. Furtive caresses—even on paper, understandings to carry on a private correspondence, fond references to old meetings, were obviously calculated to encourage her passion. He should not only have pronounced it to be hopeless, but made her, at whatever cost, recognize the hopelessness. This is where Swift's strength seems to have failed him. He was not intentionally cruel; he could not foresee the fatal event; he tried to put her aside, and he felt the "shame, disappointment, grief, surprise," of which he speaks on the avowal of her love. He gave her the most judicious advice, and tried to persuade her to accept it. But he did not make it effectual. He shrank from inflicting pain upon her and upon himself. He could not deprive himself of the sympathy which soothed his gloomy melancholy. His affection was never free from the egoistic

element which prevented him from acting unequivocally as an impartial spectator would have advised him to act, or as he would have advised another to act in a similar case. And therefore when the crisis came the very strength of his affection produced an explosion of selfish wrath; and he escaped from the intolerable position by striking down the woman whom he loved, and whose love for him had become a burden. The wrath was not the less fatal because it was half composed of remorse, and the energy of the explosion proportioned to the strength of the feeling which had held it in check.

CHAPTER VII.

WOOD'S HALFPENCE.

In one of Scott's finest novels, the old Cameronian preacher, who had been left for dead by Claverhouse's troopers, suddenly rises to confront his conquerors, and spends his last breath in denouncing the oppressors of the saints. Even such an apparition was Jonathan Swift to comfortable Whigs who were flourishing in the place of Harley and St. John, when, after ten years' quiescence, he suddenly stepped into the political arena. After the first crushing fall he had abandoned partial hope, and contented himself with establishing supremacy in his chapter. But undying wrath smouldered in his breast till time came for an outburst.

No man had ever learnt more thoroughly the lesson, "put not your faith in princes;" or had been impressed with a lower estimate of the wisdom displayed by the rulers of the world. He had been behind the scenes, and knew that the wisdom of great ministers meant just enough cunning to court the ruin which a little common sense would have avoided. Corruption was at the prow and folly at the helm. The selfish ring which he had denounced so fiercely had triumphed. It had triumphed, as he held, by flattering the new dynasty, hoodwinking the nation, and maligning its antagonists. The

cynical theory of politics was not for him, as for some comfortable cynics, an abstract proposition, which mattered very little to a sensible man; but was embodied in the bitter wrath with which he regarded his triumphant adversaries. Pessimism is perfectly compatible with bland enjoyment of the good things in a bad world; but Swift's pessimism was not of this type. It meant energetic hatred of definite things and people who were always before him.

With this feeling, he had come to Ireland; and Ireland —I am speaking of a century and a half ago—was the opprobrium of English statesmanship. There Swift had (or thought he had) always before him a concrete example of the basest form of tyranny. By Ireland, I have said, Swift meant, in the first place, the English in Ireland. In the last years of his sanity he protested indignantly against the confusion between the "savage old Irish," and the English gentry who, he said, were much better bred, spoke better English, and were more civilized than the inhabitants of many English counties.[1] He retained to the end of his life his antipathy to the Scotch colonists. He opposed their demand for political equality as fiercely in the last as in his first political utterances. He contrasted them unfavourably[2] with the Catholics, who had indeed been driven to revolt by massacre and confiscation under Puritan rule, but who were now, he declared, "true Whigs, in the best and most proper sense of the word," and thoroughly loyal to the house of Hanover. Had there been a danger of a Catholic revolt, Swift's feelings might have been different; but he always held, that they were "as inconsiderable as the women and

[1] Letter to Pope, July 13th, 1737.

[2] *Catholic Reasons for Repealing the Test.*

children," mere "hewers of wood and drawers of water," "out of all capacity of doing any mischief, if they were ever so well inclined."[3] Looking at them in this way, he felt a sincere compassion for their misery and a bitter resentment against their oppressors. The English, he said, in a remarkable letter,[4] should be ashamed of their reproaches of Irish dulness, ignorance and cowardice. Those defects were the products of slavery. He declared that the poor cottagers had "a much better natural taste for good sense, humour and raillery, than ever I observed among people of the like sort in England. But the millions of oppressions they lie under, the tyranny of their landlords, the ridiculous zeal of their priests, and the misery of the whole nation have been enough to damp the best spirits under the sun." Such a view is now commonplace enough. It was then a heresy to English statesmen, who thought that nobody but a Papist or a Jacobite could object to the tyranny of Whigs.

Swift's diagnosis of the chronic Irish disease was thoroughly political. He considered that Irish misery sprang from the subjection to a government not intentionally cruel, but absolutely selfish; to which the Irish revenue meant so much convenient political plunder, and which acted on the principle quoted from Cowley, that the happiness of Ireland should not weigh against the "least conveniency" of England. He summed up his views in a remarkable letter,[5] to be presently mentioned, the substance of which had been orally communicated to Walpole. He said to Walpole, as he said in every published, utterance :—first, that the colonists were still Englishmen

[3] *Letters on Sacramental Test in* 1738.
[4] To Sir Charles Wigan, July, 1732.
[5] To Lord Peterborough, April 21st, 1726.

and entitled to English rights; secondly, that their trade was deliberately crushed, purely for the benefit of the English of England; thirdly, that all valuable preferments were bestowed upon men born in England, as a matter of course; and finally, that in consequence of this, the upper classes, deprived of all other openings, were forced to rack-rent their tenants to such a degree that not one farmer in the kingdom out of a hundred "could afford shoes or stockings to his children, or to eat flesh or drink anything better than sour milk and water twice in a year: so that the whole country, except the Scotch plantation in the north, is a scene of misery and desolation hardly to be matched on this side Lapland." A modern reformer would give the first and chief place to this social misery. It is characteristic that Swift comes to it as a consequence from the injustice to his own class:—as, again, that he appeals to Walpole not on the simple ground that the people are wretched, but on the ground that they will be soon unable to pay the tribute to England, which he reckons at a million a year. But his conclusion might be accepted by any Irish patriot. Whatever, he says, can make a country poor and despicable, concurs in the case of Ireland. The nation is controlled by laws to which it does not consent; disowned by its brethren and countrymen; refused the liberty of trading even in its natural commodities; forced to seek for justice many hundred miles by sea and land; rendered in a manner incapable of serving the king and country in any place of honour, trust, or profit; whilst the governors have no sympathy with the governed, except what may occasionally arise from the sense of justice and philanthropy.

I am not to ask how far Swift was right in his judgments. Every line which he wrote shows that he was

thoroughly sincere and profoundly stirred by his convictions. A remarkable pamphlet, published in 1720, contained his first utterance upon the subject. It is an exhortation to the Irish to use only Irish manufactures. He applies to Ireland the fable of *Arachne and Pallas*. The goddess, indignant at being equalled in spinning, turned her rival into a spider, to spin for ever out of her own bowels in a narrow compass. He always, he says, pitied poor Arachne for so cruel and unjust a sentence, "which, however, is fully executed upon us by England with further additions of rigour and severity; for the greatest part of our bowels and vitals is extracted, without allowing us the liberty of spinning and weaving them." Swift of course accepts the economic fallacy equally taken for granted by his opponents, and fails to see that England and Ireland injured themselves as well as each other by refusing to interchange their productions. But he utters forcibly his righteous indignation against the contemptuous injustice of the English rulers, in consequence of which the "miserable people" are being reduced "to a worse condition than the peasants in France, or the vassals in Germany and Poland." Slaves, he says, have a natural disposition to be tyrants; and he himself, when his betters give him a kick, is apt to revenge it with six upon his footman. That is how the landlords treat their tenantry.

The printer of this pamphlet was prosecuted. The chief justice (Whitshed) sent back the jury nine times and kept them eleven hours before they would consent to bring in a "special verdict." The unpopularity of the prosecution became so great that it was at last dropped. Four years afterwards a more violent agitation broke out. A patent had been given to a certain William Wood for supplying Ireland with a copper coinage. Many complaints had been made,

and in September, 1723, addresses were voted by the Irish Houses of Parliament, declaring that the patent had been obtained by clandestine and false representations: that it was mischievous to the country: and that Wood had been guilty of frauds in his coinage. They were pacified by vague promises; but Walpole went on with the scheme on the strength of a favourable report of a committee of the Privy Council; and the excitement was already serious when (in 1724) Swift published the *Drapier's Letters*, which give him his chief title to eminence as a patriotic agitator.

Swift either shared or took advantage of the general belief that the mysteries of the currency are unfathomable to the human intelligence. They have to do with that world of financial magic in which wealth may be made out of paper, and all ordinary relations of cause and effect are suspended. There is, however, no real mystery about the halfpence. The small coins which do not form part of the legal tender may be considered primarily as counters. A penny is a penny, so long as twelve are change for a shilling. It is not in the least necessary for this purpose that the copper contained in the twelve penny pieces should be worth or nearly worth a shilling. A sovereign can never be worth much more than the gold of which it is made. But at the present day bronze worth only twopence is coined into twelve penny pieces.[6] The coined bronze is worth six times as much as the uncoined. The small coins must have some intrinsic value to deter forgery, and must be made of good materials to stand wear and tear. If these conditions be observed, and a proper number be issued, the value of the penny will be no

[6] The ton of bronze, I am informed, is coined into 108,000 pence, that is 450*l*. The metal is worth about 74*l*.

more affected by the value of the copper than the value of the banknote by that of the paper on which it is written. This opinion assumes that the copper coins cannot be offered or demanded in payment of any but trifling debts. The halfpence coined by Wood seem to have fulfilled these conditions, and as copper worth twopence (on the lowest computation) was coined into ten halfpence, worth fivepence, their intrinsic value was more than double that of modern halfpence.

The halfpence, then, were not objectionable upon this ground. Nay, it would have been wasteful to make them more valuable. It would have been as foolish to use more copper for the pence as to make the works of a watch of gold if brass is equally durable and convenient. But another consequence is equally clear. The effect of Wood's patent was that a mass of copper worth about 60,000*l.*,[7] became worth 100,800*l.* in the shape of halfpenny pieces. There was therefore a balance of about 40,000*l.* to pay for the expenses of coinage. It would have been waste to get rid of this by putting more copper in the coins; but if so large a profit arose from the transaction, it would go to somebody. At the present day it would be brought into the national treasury. This was not the way in which business was done in Ireland. Wood was to pay 1000*l.* a year for fourteen years to the Crown.[8] But 14,000*l.* still leaves a large margin for profit. What was to become of it? According to the admiring biographer of Sir R. Wal-

[7] Simon, in his work on the Irish coinage, makes the profit 60,000*l.*; but he reckons the copper at 1*s.* a lb., whereas from the Report of the Privy Council it would seem to be properly 1*s.* 6*d.* a lb. Swift and most later writers say 108,000*l.*, but the right sum is 100,800*l.* 360 tons coined into 2*s.* 6*d.* a lb.

[8] Monck Mason says only 300*l.* a year, but this is the sum mentioned in the Report and by Swift.

pole, the patent had been originally given by Lord Sunderland to the Duchess of Kendal, a lady whom the king delighted to honour. She already received 3000*l.* a year in pensions upon the Irish establishment, and she sold this patent to Wood for 10,000*l.* Enough was still left to give Wood a handsome profit; as in transactions of this kind, every accomplice in a dirty business expects to be well paid. So handsome, indeed, was the profit that Wood received ultimately a pension of 3000*l.* for eight years, 24,000*l.*, that is, in consideration of abandoning the patent. It was right and proper that a profit should be made on the transaction, but shameful that it should be divided between the king's mistress and William Wood, and that the bargain should be struck without consulting the Irish representatives, and maintained in spite of their protests. The Duchess of Kendal was to be allowed to take a share of the wretched halfpence in the pocket of every Irish beggar. A more disgraceful transaction could hardly be imagined, or one more calculated to justify Swift's view of the selfishness and corruption of the English rulers.

Swift saw his chance, and went to work in characteristic fashion, with unscrupulous audacity of statement, guided by the keenest strategical instinct. He struck at the heart as vigorously as he had done in the *Examiner*, but with resentment sharpened by ten years of exile. It was not safe to speak of the Duchess of Kendal's share in the transaction, though the story, as poor Archdeacon Coxe pathetically declares, was industriously propagated. But the case against Wood was all the stronger. Is he so wicked, asks Swift, as to suppose that a nation is to be ruined that he may gain three or fourscore thousand pounds? Hampden went to prison, he says, rather than

pay a few shillings wrongfully; I, says Swift, would rather be hanged than have all my "property taxed at seventeen shillings in the pound at the arbitrary will and pleasure of the venerable Mr. Wood." A simple constitutional precedent might rouse a Hampden; but to stir a popular agitation, it is as well to show that the evil actually inflicted is gigantic, independently of possible results. It requires, indeed, some audacity to prove that debasement of the copper currency can amount to a tax of seventeen shillings in the pound on all property. Here, however, Swift might simply throw the reins upon the neck of his fancy. Anybody may make any inferences he pleases in the mysterious regions of currency; and no inferences, it seems, were too audacious for his hearers, though we are left to doubt how far Swift's wrath had generated delusions in his own mind, and how far he perceived that other minds were ready to be deluded. He revels in prophesying the most extravagant consequences. The country will be undone; the tenants will not be able to pay their rents; "the farmers must rob, or beg, or leave the country; the shopkeepers in this and every other town must break or starve; the squire will hoard up all his good money to send to England and keep some poor tailor or weaver in his house, who will be glad to get bread at any rate."[9] Concrete facts are given to help the imagination. Squire Conolly must have 250 horses to bring his half-yearly rents to town; and the poor man will have to pay thirty-six of Wood's halfpence to get a quart of twopenny ale.

How is this proved? One argument is a sufficient specimen. Nobody, according to the patent, was to be forced to take Wood's halfpence; nor could any one be obliged

[9] Letter I.

to receive more than fivepence halfpenny in any one payment. This, of course, meant that the halfpence could only be used as change, and a man must pay his debts in silver or gold whenever it was possible to use a sixpence. It upsets Swift's statement about Squire Connolly's rents. But Swift is equal to the emergency. The rule means, he says, that every man must take fivepence halfpenny in every payment, *if it be offered;* which, on the next page, becomes simply in every payment; therefore making an easy assumption or two, he reckons that you will receive 160*l.* a year in these halfpence; and therefore (by other assumptions) lose 140*l.* a year.[1] It might have occurred to Swift, one would think, that both parties to the transaction could not possibly be losers. But he calmly assumes that the man who pays will lose in proportion to the increased number of coins; and the man who receives, in proportion to the depreciated value of each coin. He does not see, or think it worth notice, that the two losses obviously counterbalance each other; and he has an easy road to prophesying absolute ruin for everybody. It would be almost as great a compliment to call this sophistry, as to dignify with the name of satire a round assertion that an honest man is a cheat or a rogue.

The real grievance, however, shows through the sham argument. "It is no loss of honour," thought Swift, "to submit to the lion; but who, with the figure of a man, can think with patience of being devoured alive by a rat?" Why should Wood have this profit (even if more reasonably estimated) in defiance of the wishes of the nation? It is, says Swift, because he is an Englishman and has great friends. He proposes to meet the attempt

[1] Letter II.

by a general agreement not to take the halfpence. Briefly, the halfpence were to be "Boycotted."

Before this second letter was written the English ministers had become alarmed. A Report of the Privy Council (July 24, 1724) defended the patent, but ended by recommending that the amount to be coined should be reduced to 40,000*l.* Carteret was sent out as Lord Lieutenant to get this compromise accepted. Swift replied by a third letter, arguing the question of the patent, which he can "never suppose," or in other words, which everybody knew, to have been granted as a "job for the interest of some particular person." He vigorously asserts that the patent can never make it obligatory to accept the halfpence, and tells a story much to the purpose from old Leicester experience. The justices had reduced the price of ale to three-halfpence a quart. One of them therefore requested that they would make another order to appoint who should drink it, "for by God," said he, "I will not."

The argument thus naturally led to a further and more important question. The discussion as to the patent brought forward the question of right. Wood and his friends, according to Swift, had begun to declare that the resistance meant Jacobitism and rebellion; they asserted that the Irish were ready to shake off their dependence upon the crown of England. Swift took up the challenge and answered resolutely and eloquently. He took up the broadest ground. Ireland, he declared, depended upon England in no other sense than that in which England depended upon Ireland. Whoever thinks otherwise, he said, "I, M. B. despair, desire to be excepted; for I declare, next under God, I depend only on the king my sovereign, and the laws of my own country. I am so

far," he added, "from depending upon the people of England, that if they should rebel, I would take arms and lose every drop of my blood, to hinder the Pretender from being king of Ireland."

It had been reported that somebody (Walpole presumably) had sworn to thrust the halfpence down the throats of the Irish. The remedy, replied Swift, is totally in your own hands, "and therefore I have digressed a litttle . . . . to let you see that by the laws of God, of Nature, of Nations, and of your own country, you are and ought to be as free a people as your brethren in England." As Swift had already said in the third letter, no one could believe that any English patent would stand half an hour after an address from the English houses of Parliament such as that which had been passed against Wood's by the Irish Parliament. Whatever constitutional doubts might be raised, it was therefore come to be the plain question whether or not the English ministers should simply override the wishes of the Irish nation.

Carteret, upon landing, began by trying to suppress his adversary. A reward of 300*l.* was offered for the discovery of the author of the fourth letter. A prosecution was ordered against the printer. Swift went to the levée of the Lord Lieutenant, and reproached him bitterly for his severity against a poor tradesman who had published papers for the good of his country. Carteret answered in a happy quotation from Virgil, a feat which always seems to have brought consolation to the statesman of that day.

> Res dura et regni novitas me talia cogunt
> Moliri.

Another story is more characteristic. Swift's butler

had acted as his amanuensis, and absented himself one night whilst the proclamation was running. Swift thought that the butler was either treacherous or presuming upon his knowledge of the secret. As soon as the man returned he ordered him to strip off his livery and begone. "I am in your power," he said, "and for that very reason I will not stand your insolence." The poor butler departed, but preserved his fidelity; and Swift, when the tempest had blown over, rewarded him by appointing him verger in the cathedral. The grand jury threw out the bill against the printer in spite of all Whitshed's efforts; they were discharged; and the next grand jury presented Wood's halfpence as a nuisance. Carteret gave way, the patent was surrendered, and Swift might congratulate himself upon a complete victory.

The conclusion is in one respect rather absurd. The Irish succeeded in rejecting a real benefit at the cost of paying Wood the profit which he would have made, had he been allowed to confer it. Another point must be admitted. Swift's audacious misstatements were successful for the time in rousing the spirit of the people. They have led, however, to a very erroneous estimate of the whole case. English statesmen and historians[2] have found it so easy to expose his errors that they have thought his whole case absurd. The grievance was not what it was represented, therefore it is argued that there was no grievance. The very essence of the case was that the Irish people were to be plundered by the German mistress; and such plunder was possible because the English people, as Swift says, never thought of Ireland

[2] See for example Lord Stanhope's account. For the other view see Mr. Lecky's *History of the Eighteenth Century*, and Mr. Froude's *English in Ireland*.

except when there was nothing else to be talked of in the coffee-houses.[3] Owing to the conditions of the controversy, this grievance only came out gradually, and could never be fully stated. Swift could never do more than hint at the transaction. His letters (including three which appeared after the last mentioned, enforcing the same case) have often been cited as models of eloquence, and compared to Demosthenes. We must make some deduction from this, as in the case of his former political pamphlets. The intensity of his absorption in the immediate end, deprives them of some literary merits; and we, to whom the sophistries are palpable enough, are apt to resent them. Anybody can be effective in a way, if he chooses to lie boldly. Yet, in another sense, it is hard to over-praise the letters. They have in a high degree the peculiar stamp of Swift's genius; the vein of the most nervous common-sense and pithy assertion with an undercurrent of intense passion, the more impressive because it is never allowed to exhale in mere rhetoric.

Swift's success, the dauntless front which he had shown to the oppressor, made him the idol of his countrymen. A drapier's club was formed in his honour, which collected the letters and drank toasts and sang songs to celebrate their hero. In a sad letter to Pope, in 1737, he complains that none of his equals care for him; but adds that as he walks the streets he has "a thousand hats and blessings upon old scores which those we call the gentry have forgot." The people received him as their champion. When he returned from England in 1726, bells were rung, bonfires lighted and a guard of honour escorted him to the deanery. Towns voted him

[3] Letter IV.

their freedom and received him like a prince. When Walpole spoke of arresting him, a prudent friend told the minister that the messenger would require a guard of 10,000 soldiers. Corporations asked his advice in elections, and the weavers appealed to him on questions about their trade. In one of his satires,[4] Swift had attacked a certain Serjeant Bettesworth—

> Thus at the bar the booby Bettesworth
> Though half-a-crown o'erpays his sweat's worth.

Bettesworth called upon him with, as Swift reports, a knife in his pocket, and complained in such terms as to imply some intention of personal violence. The neighbours instantly sent a deputation to the dean, proposing to take vengeance upon Bettesworth, and though he induced them to disperse peaceably, they formed a guard to watch the house; and Bettesworth complained that his attack upon the dean had lowered his professional income by 1200*l.* a year. A quaint example of his popularity is given by Sheridan. A great crowd had collected to see an eclipse. Swift thereupon sent out the bellman to give notice that the eclipse had been postponed by the dean's orders; and the crowd dispersed.

Influence with the people, however, could not bring Swift back to power. At one time there seemed to be a gleam of hope. Swift visited England twice in 1726 and 1727. He paid long visits to his old friend Pope, and again met Bolingbroke, now returned from exile, and trying to make a place in English politics. Peterborough introduced the dean to Walpole, to whom Swift detailed his views upon Irish politics. Walpole was the last man to set about a great reform from mere con-

[4] "On the words Brother Protestants, &c."

siderations of justice and philanthropy, and was not likely to trust a confidant of Bolingbroke. He was civil but indifferent. Swift, however, was introduced by his friends to Mrs. Howard, the mistress of the Prince of Wales, soon to become George II. The princess, afterwards Queen Caroline, ordered Swift to come and see her, and he complied, as he says, after nine commands. He told her that she had lately seen a wild boy from Germany, and now he supposed she wanted to see a wild dean from Ireland. Some civilities passed; Swift offered some plaids of Irish manufacture, and the princess promised some medals in return. When, in the next year, George I. died, the Opposition hoped great things from the change. Pulteney had tried to get Swift's powerful help for the *Craftsman*, the Opposition organ; and the Opposition hoped to upset Walpole. Swift, who had thought of going to France for his health, asked Mrs. Howard's advice. She recommended him to stay; and he took the recommendation as amounting to a promise of support. He had some hopes of obtaining English preferment in exchange for his deanery in what he calls (in the date to one of his letters [5]) "wretched Dublin in miserable Ireland." It soon appeared, however, that the mistress was powerless; and that Walpole was to be as firm as ever in his seat. Swift returned to Ireland, never again to leave it: to lose soon afterwards his beloved Stella, and nurse an additional grudge against courts and favourites.

The bitterness with which he resented Mrs. Howard's supposed faithlessness is painfully illustrative in truth of the morbid state of mind which was growing upon him

[5] To Lord Stafford, Nov. 26, 1725.

"You think," he says to Bolingbroke in 1729, "as I ought to think, that it is time for me to have done with the world; and so I would, if I could get into a better before I was called into the best, and not die here in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole." That terrible phrase expresses but too vividly the state of mind which was now becoming familiar to him. Separated by death and absence from his best friends, and tormented by increasing illness, he looked out upon a state of things in which he could see no ground for hope. The resistance to Wood's halfpence had staved off immediate ruin; but had not cured the fundamental evil. Some tracts upon Irish affairs, written after the Drapier's Letters, sufficiently indicate his despairing vein. "I am," he says in 1737, when proposing some remedy for the swarms of beggars in Dublin, "a desponder by nature," and he has found out that the people will never stir themselves to remove a single grievance. His old prejudices were as keen as ever, and could dictate personal outbursts. He attacked the bishops bitterly for offering certain measures which in his view sacrificed the permanent interests of the Church to that of the actual occupants. He showed his own sincerity by refusing to take fines for leases which would have benefited himself at the expense of his successors. With equal earnestness he still clung to the Test Acts, and assailed the Protestant dissenters with all his old bitterness, and ridiculed their claims to brotherhood with Churchmen. To the end he was a Churchman before everything. One of the last of his poetical performances was prompted by the sanction given by the Irish Parliament to an opposition to certain "titles of ejectment." He had defended the right of the Irish Parliament against English rulers; but when it attacked

the interests of his Church his fury showed itself in the most savage satire that he ever wrote, the *Legion Club*. It is an explosion of wrath tinged with madness.

> Could I from the building's top
> Hear the rattling thunder drop,
> While the devil upon the roof
> (If the devil be thunder-proof)
> Should with poker fiery red
> Crack the stones and melt the lead,
> Drive them down on every skull
> When the den of thieves is full;
> Quite destroy the harpies' nest,
> How might this our isle be blest!

What follows fully keeps up to this level. Swift flings filth like a maniac, plunges into ferocious personalities, and ends fitly with the execration,—

> May their God, the devil, confound them.

He was seized with one of his fits whilst writing the poem and was never afterwards capable of sustained composition.

Some further pamphlets—especially one on the State of Ireland—repeat and enforce his views. One of them requires special mention. The *Modest Proposal* (written in 1729) *for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from being a Burden to their Parents or Country*—the proposal being that they should be turned into articles of food—gives the very essence of Swift's feeling, and is one of the most tremendous pieces of satire in existence. It shows the quality already noticed. Swift is burning with a passion, the glow of which makes other passions look cold, as it is said that some bright lights cause other illuminating objects to cast a shadow. Yet his face is absolutely grave, and he details his plan as calmly as a

modern projector suggesting the importation of Australian meat. The superficial coolness may be revolting to tender-hearted people, and has indeed led to condemnation of the supposed ferocity of the author almost as surprising as the criticisms which can see in it nothing but an exquisite piece of humour. It is, in truth, fearful to read even now. Yet we can forgive and even sympathize when we take it for what it really is—the most complete expression of burning indignation against intolerable wrongs. It utters, indeed, a serious conviction. "I confess myself," says Swift in a remarkable paper,[6] "to be touched with a very sensible pleasure when I hear of a mortality in any country parish or village, where the wretches are forced to pay for a filthy cabin and two ridges of potatoes treble the worth; brought up to steal and beg for want of work; to whom death would be the best thing to be wished for, on account both of themselves and the public." He remarks in the same place on the lamentable contradiction presented in Ireland to the maxim that the "people are the riches of a nation," and the *Modest Proposal* is the fullest comment on this melancholy reflection. After many visionary proposals, he has at last hit upon the plan, which has at least the advantage that by adopting it "we can incur no danger of disobliging England. For this kind of commodity will not bear exportation, the flesh being of too tender a consistence to admit a long continuance in salt, although perhaps I could name a country which would be glad to eat up a whole nation without it."

Swift once asked Delany[7] whether the "corruptions and villanies of men in power did not eat his flesh and exhaust his spirits?" "No," said Delany. "Why, how

[6] *Maxims Controuled in Ireland.* [7] *Delany*, p. 148.

can you help it?" said Swift. "Because," replied Delany, "I am commanded to the contrary—*fret not thyself because of the ungodly.*" That, like other wise maxims, is capable of an ambiguous application. As Delany took it, Swift might perhaps have replied that it was a very comfortable maxim—for the ungodly. His own application of Scripture is different. It tells us, he says, in his proposal for using Irish manufactures, that "oppression makes a wise man mad." If, therefore, some men are not mad, it must be because they are not wise. In truth, it is characteristic of Swift that he could never learn the great lesson of submission even to the inevitable. He could not, like an easy-going Delany, submit to oppression which might possibly be resisted with success; but as little could he submit when all resistance was hopeless. His rage, which could find no better outlet, burnt inwardly and drove him mad. It is very interesting to compare Swift's wrathful denunciations with Berkeley's treatment of the same before in the *Querist* (1735-7). Berkeley is full of luminous suggestions upon economical questions which are entirely beyond Swift's mark. He is in a region quite above the sophistries of the *Drapier's Letters.* He sees equally the terrible grievance that no people in the world is so beggarly, wretched, and destitute as the common Irish. But he thinks all complaints against the English rule useless and therefore foolish. If the English restrain our trade ill-advisedly, is it not, he asks, plainly our interest to accommodate ourselves to them (No. 136)? Have we not the advantage of English protection without sharing English responsibilities? He asks, "whether England doth not really love us and wish well to us as bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh? and whether it be not our part to cultivate this love and affection all manner of ways?" (Nos. 322, 323.) One can

fancy how Swift must have received this characteristic suggestion of the admirable Berkeley, who could not bring himself to think ill of any one. Berkeley's main contention is no doubt sound in itself, namely, that the welfare of the country really depended on the industry and economy of its inhabitants, and that such qualities would have made the Irish comfortable in spite of all English restrictions and Government abuses. But, then, Swift might well have answered that such general maxims are idle. It is all very well for divines to tell people to become good and to find out that then they will be happy. But how are they to be made good? Are the Irish intrinsically worse than other men, or is their laziness and restlessness due to special and removable circumstances? In the latter case is there not more real value in attacking tangible evils than in propounding general maxims and calling upon all men to submit to oppression, and even to believe in the oppressor's good-will in the name of Christian charity? To answer those questions would be to plunge into interminable and hopeless controversies. Meanwhile Swift's fierce indignation against English oppression might almost as well have been directed against a law of nature for any immediate result. Whether the rousing of the national spirit was any benefit is a question which I must leave to others. In any case, the work, however darkened by personal feeling or love of class-privilege, expressed as hearty a hatred of oppression as ever animated a human being.

CHAPTER VIII

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS.

THE winter of 1713-14 passed by Swift in England was full of anxiety and vexation. He found time, however, to join in a remarkable literary association. The so-called Scriblerus Club does not appear, indeed, to have had any definite organization. The rising young wits, Pope and Gay, both of them born in 1688, were already becoming famous, and were taken up by Swift, still in the zenith of his political power. Parnell, a few years their senior, had been introduced by Swift to Oxford as a convert from Whiggism. All three became intimate with Swift and Arbuthnot, the most learned and amiable of the whole circle of Swift's friends. Swift declared him to have every quality that could make a man amiable and useful with but one defect—he had "a sort of slouch in his walk;" he was loved and respected by every one, and was one of the most distinguished of the Brothers. Swift and Arbuthnot and their three juniors discussed literary plans in the midst of the growing political excitement. Even Oxford used, as Pope tells us, to amuse himself during the very crisis of his fate by scribbling verses and talking nonsense with the members of this informal Club, and some doggerel lines exchanged with him remain as a specimen—a poor one it is to be hoped—of their intercourse.

The familiarity thus begun continued through the life of the members. Swift can have seen very little of Pope. He hardly made his acquaintance till the latter part of 1713; they parted in the summer of 1714; and never met again except in Swift's two visits to England in 1726-27. Yet their correspondence shows an affection which was no doubt heightened by the consciousness of each that the friendship of his most famous contemporary author was creditable; but which, upon Swift's side at least, was thoroughly sincere and cordial, and strengthened with advancing years.

The final cause of the Club was supposed to be the composition of a joint-stock satire. We learn from an interesting letter[1] that Pope formed the original design; though Swift thought that Arbuthnot was the only one capable of carrying it out. The scheme was to write the memoirs of an imaginary pedant, who had dabbled with equal wrong-headedness in all kinds of knowledge; and thus recalls Swift's early performances—the *Battle of the Books* and the *Tale of a Tub*. Arbuthnot begs Swift to work upon it during his melancholy retirement at Letcombe. Swift had other things to occupy his mind; and upon the dispersion of the party the Club fell into abeyance. Fragments of the original plan were carried out by Pope and Arbuthnot, and form part of the *Miscellanies*, to which Swift contributed a number of poetical scraps, published under Pope's direction in 1726-27. It seems probable that *Gulliver* originated in Swift's mind in the course of his meditations upon Scriblerus. The composition of *Gulliver* was one of the occupations by which he amused himself after recovering from the great shock of

[1] It is in the Forster library, and, I believe, unpublished, in answer to Arbuthnot's letter mentioned in the text.

his "exile." He worked, as he seems always to have done, slowly and intermittently. Part of Brobdingnag at least, as we learn from a letter of Vanessa's, was in existence by 1722. Swift brought the whole manuscript to England in 1726, and it was published anonymously in the following winter. The success was instantaneous and overwhelming. "I will make over all my profits" (in a work then being published) "to you," writes Arbuthnot, "for the property of *Gulliver's Travels*, which, I believe, will have as great a run as John Bunyan." The anticipation was amply fulfilled. *Gulliver's Travels* is one of the very few books some knowledge of which may be fairly assumed in any one who reads anything. Yet something must be said of the secret of the astonishing success of this unique performance.

One remark is obvious. *Gulliver's Travels* (omitting certain passages) is almost the most delightful children's book ever written. Yet it has been equally valued as an unrivalled satire. Old Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, was "in raptures with it," says Gay, "and can dream of nothing else." She forgives his bitter attacks upon her party in consideration of his assault upon human nature. He gives, she declares, "the most accurate" (that is, of course, the most scornful) "account of kings, ministers, bishops, and courts of justice, that is possible to be writ." Another curious testimony may be noticed. Godwin, when tracing all evils to the baneful effects of government, declares that the author of *Gulliver* showed a "more profound insight into the true principles of political justice than any preceding or contemporary author." The playful form was unfortunate, thinks this grave philosopher, as blinding mankind to the "inestimable wisdom" of the work. This double triumph is remarkable. We may not share the

opinions of the cynics of the day, or of the revolutionists of a later generation; but it is strange that they should be fascinated by a work which is studied with delight, without the faintest suspicion of any ulterior meaning, by the infantile mind.

The charm of Gulliver for the young depends upon an obvious quality, which is indicated in Swift's report of the criticism by an Irish bishop, who said that "the book was full of improbable lies, and for his part he hardly believed a word of it." There is something pleasant in the intense gravity of the narrative, which recalls and may have been partly suggested by *Robinson Crusoe*, though it came naturally to Swift. I have already spoken of his delight in mystification, and the detailed realization of pure fiction seems to have been delightful in itself. The Partridge pamphlets and its various practical jokes are illustrations of a tendency which fell in with the spirit of the time, and of which *Gulliver* may be regarded as the highest manifestation. Swift's peculiarity is in the curious sobriety of fancy, which leads him to keep in his most daring flights upon the confines of the possible. In the imaginary travels of Lucian and Rabelais, to which *Gulliver* is generally compared, we frankly take leave of the real world altogether. We are treated with arbitrary and monstrous combinations which may be amusing, but which do not challenge even a semblance of belief. In *Gulliver* this is so little the case that it can hardly be said in strictness that the fundamental assumptions are even impossible. Why should there not be creatures in human form with whom as in Lilliput, one of our inches represents a foot, or, as in Brobdingnag, one of our feet represents an inch? The assumption is so modest that we are presented—it may be said—with a definite and

soluble problem. We have not, as in other fictitious worlds, to deal with a state of things in which the imagination is bewildered, but with one in which it is agreeably stimulated. We have certainly to consider an extreme and exceptional case; but one to which all the ordinary laws of human nature are still strictly applicable. In Voltaire's trifle, *Micromegas*, we are presented to beings eight leagues in height and endowed with seventy-two senses. For Voltaire's purpose the stupendous exaggeration is necessary; for he wishes to insist upon the minuteness of human capacities. But the assumption of course disqualifies us from taking any intelligent interest in a region where no precedent is available for our guidance. We are in the air; anything and everything is possible. But Swift modestly varies only one element in the problem. Imagine giants and dwarfs as tall as a house or as low as a footstool, and let us see what comes of it. That is a plain, almost a mathematical problem; and we can therefore judge his success, and receive pleasure from the ingenuity and verisimilitude of his creations.

"When you have once thought of big men and little men," said Johnson, perversely enough, "it is easy to do the rest." The first step might perhaps seem in this case to be the easiest; yet nobody ever thought of it before Swift; and nobody has ever had similar good fortune since. There is no other fictitious world the denizens of which have become so real for us, and which has supplied so many images familiar to every educated mind. But the apparent ease is due to the extreme consistency and sound judgment of Swift's realization. The conclusions follow so inevitably from the primary data that when they are once drawn we agree that they could not have been otherwise; and infer, rashly, that anybody else could

have drawn them. It is as easy as lying; but everybody who has seriously tried the experiment knows that even lying is by no means so easy as it appears at first sight. In fact, Swift's success is something unique. The charming plausibility of every incident, throughout the two first parts, commends itself to children, who enjoy definite concrete images, and are fascinated by a world which is at once full of marvels, surpassing Jack the Giant Killer and the wonders seen by Sinbad, and yet as obviously and undeniably true as the adventures of Robinson Crusoe himself. Nobody who has read the book can ever forget it; and we may add that besides the child-like pleasure which arises from a distinct realization of a strange world of fancy, the two first books are sufficiently good-humoured. Swift seems to be amused as well as amusing. They were probably written during the least intolerable part of his exile. The period of composition includes the years of the Vanessa tragedy and of the war of Wood's halfpence; it was finished when Stella's illness was becoming constantly more threatening, and published little more than a year before her death. The last books show Swift's most savage temper; but we may hope that in spite of disease, disappointments, and a growing alienation from mankind, Swift could still enjoy an occasional piece of spontaneous, unadulterated fun. He could still forget his cares, and throw the reins on the neck of his fancy. At times there is a certain charm even in the characters. Every one has a liking for the giant maid of all work, Glumdalelitch, whose affection for her plaything is a quaint inversion of the ordinary relations between Swift and his feminine adorers. The grave, stern, irascible man can relax after a sort, though his strange idiosyncrasy comes out as distinctly in his relaxation as in his passions.

I will not dwell upon this aspect of *Gulliver*, which is obvious to every one. There is another question which we are forced to ask, and which is not very easy to answer. What does *Gulliver* mean? It is clearly a satire—but who and what are its objects? Swift states his own view very unequivocally. "I heartily hate and detest that animal called man," he says,[2] "although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth." He declares that man is not an *animal rationale*, but only *rationis capax:* and he then adds, "Upon this great foundation of misanthropy . . . . the whole building of my travels is erected." "If the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it," he says in the same letter, "I would burn my travels." He indulges in a similar reflection to Sheridan.[3] "Expect no more from man," he says, "than such an animal is capable of, and you will every day find my description of Yahoos more resembling. You should think and deal with every man as a villain, without calling him so, or flying from him or valuing him less. This is an old true lesson." In spite of these avowals, of a kind which, in Swift, must not be taken too literally, we find it rather hard to admit that the essence of *Gulliver* can be an expression of this doctrine. The tone becomes morose and sombre, and even ferocious; but it has been disputed whether in any case it can be regarded simply as an utterance of misanthropy.

Gulliver's Travels belongs to a literary genus full of grotesque and anomalous forms. Its form is derived from some of the imaginary travels of which Lucian's *True History*— itself a burlesque of some early travellers' tales— is the first example. But it has an affinity also to such

[2] Letter to Pope, Sept. 29th, 1725.

[3] Letter to Sheridan, Sept. 11th, 1725.

books as Bacon's *Atlantis*, and More's *Utopia;* and, again, to later philosophical romances like *Candide* and *Rasselas;* and not least, perhaps, to the ancient fables, such as *Reynard the Fox*, to which Swift refers in the *Tale of a Tub*. It may be compared, again, to the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the whole family of allegories. The full-blown allegory resembles the game of chess said to have been played by some ancient monarch, in which the pieces were replaced by real human beings. The movements of the actors were not determined by the passions proper to their character, but by the external set of rules imposed upon them by the game. The allegory is a kind of picture-writing, popular, like picture-writing at a certain stage of development, but wearisome at more cultivated periods, when we prefer to have abstract theories conveyed in abstract language, and limit the artist to the intrinsic meanings of the images in which he deals. The whole class of more or less allegorical writing has thus the peculiarity that something more is meant than meets the ear. Part of its meaning depends upon a tacit convention in virtue of which a beautiful woman, for example, is not simply a beautiful woman, but also a representative of Justice and Charity. And as any such convention is more or less arbitrary, we are often in perplexity to interpret the author's meaning, and also to judge of the propriety of the symbols. The allegorical intention, again, may be more or less present: and such a book as Gulliver must be regarded as lying somewhere between the allegory and the direct revelation of truth, which is more or less implied in the work of every genuine artist. Its true purpose has thus rather puzzled critics. Hazlitt[4] urges, for example, with his usual

[4] *Lectures on the English Poets.*

brilliancy, that Swift's purpose was to "strip empty pride and grandeur of the imposing air which external circumstances throw around them." Swift accordingly varies the scale, so as to show the insignificance or the grossness of our self-love. He does this with "mathematical precision;" he tries an experiment upon human nature; and with the result that "nothing solid, nothing valuable is left in his system but wisdom and virtue." So Gulliver's carrying off the fleet of Blefuscu is "a mortifying stroke, aimed at national glory." "After that, we have only to consider which of the contending parties was in the right."

Hazlitt naturally can see nothing misanthropical or innocent in such a conclusion. The mask of imposture is torn off the world, and only imposture can complain. This view, which has no doubt its truth, suggests some obvious doubts. We are not invited, as a matter of fact, to attend to the question of right and wrong, as between Lilliput and Blefuscu. The real sentiment in Swift is that a war between these miserable pygmies is, in itself, contemptible; and therefore, as he infers, war between men six feet high is equally contemptible. The truth is that, although Swift's solution of the problem may be called mathematically precise, the precision does not extend to the supposed argument. If we insist upon treating the question as one of strict logic, the only conclusion which could be drawn from Gulliver is the very safe one that the interest of the human drama does not depend upon the size of the actors. A pygmy or a giant endowed with all our functions and thoughts would be exactly as interesting as a being of the normal stature. It does not require a journey to imaginary regions to teach us so much. And if we say that Swift has shown

us in his pictures the real essence of human life, we only say for him what might be said with equal force of Shakspeare or Balzac, or any great artist. The bare proof that the essence is not dependent upon the external condition of size is superfluous and irrelevant; and we must admit that Swift's method is childish, or that it does not adhere to this strict logical canon.

Hazlitt, however, comes nearer the truth, as I think, when he says that Swift takes a view of human nature such as might be taken by a being of a higher sphere. That, at least, is his purpose; only, as I think, he pursues it by a neglect of "scientific reasoning." The use of the machinery is simply to bring us into a congenial frame of mind. He strikes the key-note of contempt by his imagery of dwarfs and giants. We despise the petty quarrels of beings six inches high; and therefore we are prepared to despise the wars carried on by a Marlborough and a Eugene. We transfer the contempt based upon mere size, to the motives, which are the same in big men and little. The argument, if argument there be, is a fallacy; but it is equally efficacious for the feelings. You see the pettiness and cruelty of the Lilliputians, who want to conquer an empire defended by toy-ships; and you are tacitly invited to consider whether the bigness of French men-of-war makes an attack upon them more respectable. The force of the satire depends ultimately upon the vigour with which Swift has described the real passions of human beings, big or little. He really means to express a bitter contempt for statesmen and warriors, and seduces us to his side, for the moment, by asking us to look at a diminutive representation of the same beings. The quarrels which depend upon the difference between the high-boots and the low-heeled shoes; or upon breaking eggs

at the big or little end; the party intrigues which are settled by cutting capers on the tight-rope, are meant; of course, in ridicule of political and religious parties; and its force depends upon our previous conviction that the party-quarrels between our fellows are, in fact, equally contemptible. Swift's satire is congenial to the mental attitude of all who have persuaded themselves that men are, in fact, a set of contemptible fools and knaves, in whose quarrels and mutual slaughterings the wise and good could not persuade themselves to take a serious interest. He "proves" nothing, mathematically or otherwise. If you do not share his sentiments, there is nothing in the mere alteration of the scale to convince you that they are right; you may say, with Hazlitt, that heroism is as admirable in a Lilliputian as in a Brobdingnagian, and believe that war calls forth patriotism, and often advances civilization. What Swift has really done is to provide for the man who despises his species a number of exceedingly effective symbols for the utterance of his contempt. A child is simply amused with Bigendians and Littleendians; a philosopher thinks that the questions really at the bottom of church quarrels are in reality of more serious import: but the cynic who has learnt to disbelieve in the nobility or wisdom of the great mass of his species finds a most convenient metaphor for expressing his disbelief. In this way *Gulliver's Travels* contains a whole gallery of caricatures thoroughly congenial to the despisers of humanity.

In Brobdingnag Swift is generally said to be looking, as Scott expresses it, through the other end of the telescope. He wishes to show the grossness of men's passions, as before he has shown their pettiness. Some of the incidents are devised in this sense; but we may notice that

in Brobdingnag he recurs to the Lilliput view. He gives such an application to his fable as may be convenient, without bothering himself as to logical consistency. He points out indeed the disgusting appearances which would be presented by a magnified human body; but the King of Brobdingnag looks down upon Gulliver, just as Gulliver looked down upon the Lilliputians. The monarch sums up his view emphatically enough by saying, after listening to Gulliver's version of modern history, that "the bulk of your natives appear to me to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the face of the earth." In Lilliput and Brobdingnag, however, the satire scarcely goes beyond pardonable limits. The details are often simply amusing, such as Gulliver's fear when he gets home, of trampling upon the pygmies whom he sees around him. And even the severest satire may be taken without offence by every one who believes that petty motives, folly and selfishness, play a large enough part in human life to justify some indignant exaggerations. It is in the later parts that the ferocity of the man utters itself more fully. The ridicule of the inventors in the third book is, as Arbuthnot said at once, the least successful part of the whole; not only because Swift was getting beyond his knowledge, and beyond the range of his strongest antipathies, but also because there is no longer the ingenious plausibility of the earlier books. The voyage to the Houyhnhnms, which forms the best part, is more powerful, but more painful and repulsive.

A word must here be said of the most unpleasant part of Swift's character. A morbid interest in the physically disgusting is shown in several of his writings. Some minor pieces, which ought to have been burnt, simply

make the gorge rise. Mrs. Pilkington tells us, and we can for once believe her, that one "poem" actually made her mother sick. It is idle to excuse this on the ground of contemporary freedom of speech. His contemporaries were heartily disgusted. Indeed, though it is true that they revealed certain propensities more openly, I see no reason to think that such propensities were really stronger in them than in their descendants. The objection to Swift is not that he spoke plainly, but that he brooded over filth unnecessarily. No parallel can be found for his tendency even in writers, for example, like Smollett and Fielding, who can be coarse enough when they please, but whose freedom of speech reveals none of Swift's morbid tendency. His indulgence in revolting images is to some extent an indication of a diseased condition of his mind, perhaps of actual mental decay. Delany says that it grew upon him in his later years, and, very gratuitously, attributes it to Pope's influence. The peculiarity is the more remarkable, because Swift was a man of the most scrupulous personal cleanliness. He was always enforcing this virtue with special emphasis. He was rigorously observant of decency in ordinary conversation. Delany once saw him "fall into a furious resentment" with Stella for "a very small failure of delicacy." So far from being habitually coarse, he pushed fastidiousness to the verge of prudery. It is one of the superficial paradoxes of Swift's character that this very shrinking from filth became perverted into an apparently opposite tendency. In truth, his intense repugnance to certain images led him to use them as the only adequate expression of his savage contempt. Instances might be given in some early satires, and in the attack upon dissenters in the *Tale of a Tub*. His intensity of loathing

leads him to besmear his antagonists with filth. He becomes disgusting in the effort to express his disgust. As his misanthropy deepened, he applied the same method to mankind at large. He tears aside the veil of decency to show the bestial elements of human nature; and his characteristic irony makes him preserve an apparent calmness during the revolting exhibition. His state of mind is strictly analogous to that of some religious ascetics, who stimulate their contempt for the flesh by fixing their gaze upon decaying bodies. They seek to check the love of beauty by showing us beauty in the grave. The cynic in Mr. Tennyson's poem tells us that every face, however full—

> Padded round with flesh and blood,
> Is but moulded on a skull.

Swift—a practised self-tormentor, though not in the ordinary ascetic sense—mortifies any disposition to admire his fellows by dwelling upon the physical necessities which seem to lower and degrade human pride. Beauty is but skin deep; beneath it is a vile carcase. He always sees the "flayed woman" of the *Tale of a Tub*. The thought is hideous, hateful, horrible, and therefore it fascinates him. He loves to dwell upon the hateful, because it justifies his hate. He nurses his misanthropy, as he might tear his flesh to keep his mortality before his eyes.

The Yahoo is the embodiment of the bestial element in man; and Swift in his wrath takes the bestial for the predominating element. The hideous, filthy, lustful monster yet asserts its relationship to him in the most humiliating fashion: and he traces in its conduct the resemblance to all the main activities of the human being. Like the human being it fights and squabbles for the

satisfaction of its lust, or to gain certain shiny yellow stones; it befouls the weak and fawns upon the strong with loathsome compliance; shows a strange love of dirt, and incurs diseases by laziness and gluttony. Gulliver gives an account of his own breed of Yahoos, from which it seems that they differ from the subjects of the Houyhnhnms only by showing the same propensities on a larger scale; and justifies his master's remark that all their institutions are owing to "gross defects in reason and by consequence in virtue." The Houyhnhnms meanwhile represent Swift's Utopia; they prosper and are happy, truthful and virtuous, and therefore able to dispense with lawyers, physicians, ministers and all the other apparatus of an effete civilization. It is in this doctrine, as I may observe in passing, that Swift falls in with Godwin and the revolutionists, though they believed in human perfectibility, whilst they traced every existing evil to the impostures and corruptions essential to all systems of government. Swift's view of human nature, is too black to admit of any hopes of their millennium.

The full wrath of Swift against his species shows itself in this ghastly caricature. It is lamentable and painful, though even here we recognize the morbid perversion of a noble wrath against oppression. One other portrait in Swift's gallery demands a moment's notice. No poetic picture in Dante or Milton can exceed the strange power of his prose description of the Struldbrugs—those hideous immortals who are damned to an everlasting life of drivelling incompetence. It is a translation of the affecting myth of Tithonus into the repulsive details of downright prose. It is idle to seek for any particular moral from these hideous phantoms of Swift's dismal *Inferno*. They embody the terror which

was haunting his imagination as old age was drawing upon him. The sight, he says himself, should reconcile a man to death. The mode of reconciliation is terribly characteristic. Life is but a weary business at best; but, at least, we cannot wish to drain so repulsive a cup to the dregs, when even the illusions which cheered us at moments have been ruthlessly destroyed. Swift was but too clearly prophesying the melancholy decay into which he was himself to sink.

The later books of *Gulliver* have been in some sense excised from the popular editions of the Travels. The Yahoos, and Houyhnhnms, and Struldbrugs, are indeed known by name almost as well as the inhabitants of Lilliput and Brobdingnag; but this part of the book is certainly not reading for babes. It was probably written during the years when he was attacking public corruption, and when his private happiness was being destroyed, when therefore his wrath against mankind and against his own fate was stimulated to the highest pitch. Readers who wish to indulge in a harmless play of fancy will do well to omit the last two voyages; for the strain of misanthropy which breathes in them is simply oppressive. They are probably the sources from which the popular impression of Swift's character is often derived. It is important, therefore, to remember that they were wrung from him in later years, after a life tormented by constant disappointment and disease. Most people hate the misanthropist even if they are forced to admire his power. Yet we must not be carried too far by the words. Swift's misanthropy was not all ignoble. We generally prefer flattery even to sympathy. We like the man who is blind to our faults better than the man who sees them and yet pities our distresses. We have the same kind of

feeling for the race as we have in our own case. We are attracted by the kindly optimist who assures us that good predominates in everything and everybody, and believes that a speedy advent of the millennium must reward our manifold excellence. We cannot forgive those who hold men to be "mostly fools," or, as Swift would assert, mere brutes in disguise, and even carry out that disagreeable opinion in detail There is something uncomfortable and therefore repellent of sympathy in the mood which dwells upon the darker side of society, even though with wrathful indignation against the irremovable evils. Swift's hatred of oppression, burning and genuine as it was, is no apology with most readers for his perseverance in asserting its existence. "Speak comfortable things to us" is the cry of men to the prophet in all ages; and he who would assault abuses must count upon offending many who do not approve them, but who would therefore prefer not to believe in them. Swift, too, mixed an amount of egoism with his virtuous indignation, which clearly lowers his moral dignity. He really hates wrongs to his race; but his sensitiveness is roused when they are injuries to himself, and committed by his enemies. The indomitable spirit which made him incapable even of yielding to necessity, which makes him beat incessantly against the bars which it was hopeless to break, and therefore waste powers which might have done good service by aiming at the unattainable, and nursing grudges against inexorable necessity, limits our sympathy with his better nature. Yet some of us may take a different view, and rather pity than condemn the wounded spirit so tortured and perverted, in consideration of the real philanthropy which underlies the misanthropy, and the righteous hatred of brutality and

oppression which is but the seamy side of a generous sympathy. At least we should be rather awed than repelled by this spectacle of a nature of magnificent power struck down, bruised and crushed under fortune, and yet fronting all antagonists with increasing pride, and comforting itself with scorn even when it can no longer injure its adversaries.

CHAPTER IX.

DECLINE.

SWIFT survived his final settlement in Ireland for more than thirty years, though during the last five or six it was but the outside shell of him that lived. During every day in all those years Swift must have eaten and drunk, and somehow or other got through the twenty-four hours. The war against Wood's halfpence employed at most a few months in 1724, and all his other political writings would scarcely fill a volume of this size. A modern journalist who could prove that he had written as little in six months would deserve a testimonial. *Gulliver's Travels* appeared in 1727; and ten years were to pass before his intellect became hopelessly clouded. How was the remainder of his time filled?

The death of Stella marks a critical point. Swift told Gay in 1723 that it had taken three years to reconcile him to the country to which he was condemned for ever. He came back "with an ill head and an aching heart."[1] He was separated from the friends he had loved, and too old to make new friends. A man, as he says elsewhere,[2] who had been bred in a coal-pit might pass his time in it well enough; but if sent back to it after a few months in

[1] To Bolingbroke, May, 1719.

[2] To Pope and Gay, Oct. 15th, 1726.

upper air, he would find content less easy. Swift, in fact, never became resigned to the "coal-pit," or, to use another of his phrases, the "wretched, dirty dog-hole and prison," of which he could only say that it was a "place good enough to die in." Yet he became so far acclimatized as to shape a tolerable existence out of the fragments left to him. Intelligent and cultivated men in Dublin, especially amongst the clergy and the fellows of Trinity College, gathered round their famous countryman. Swift formed a little court; he rubbed up his classics to the academical standard, read a good deal of history, and even amused himself with mathematics. He received on Sundays at the deanery, though his entertainments seem to have been rather too economical for the taste of his guests. "The ladies," Stella and Mrs. Dingley, were recognized as more or less domesticated with him. Stella helped to receive his guests, though not ostensibly as mistress of the household; and, if we may accept Swift's estimate of her social talents, must have been a very charming hostess. If some of Swift's guests were ill at ease in presence of the imperious and moody exile, we may believe that during Stella's life there was more than a mere semblance of agreeable society at the deanery. Her death, as Delany tells us,[3] led to a painful change. Swift's temper became sour and ungovernable; his avarice grew into a monomania; at times he grudged even a single bottle of wine to his friends; the giddiness and deafness which had tormented him by fits, now became a part of his life. Reading came to be impossible, because (as Delany thinks) his obstinate refusal to wear spectacles had injured his sight. He still struggled hard against disease; he rode energetically,

[3] *Delany*, p. 144.

though two servants had to accompany him in case of accidents from giddiness; he took regular "constitutionals" up and down stairs when he could not go out. His friends thought that he injured himself by over-exercise; and the battle was necessarily a losing one. Gradually the gloom deepened; friends dropped off by death, and were alienated by his moody temper; he was surrounded, as they thought, by designing sycophants. His cousin, Mrs. Whiteway, who took care of him in his last years, seems to have been both kindly and sensible; but he became unconscious of kindness, and in 1741 had to be put under restraint. We may briefly fill up some details in the picture.

Swift at Dublin recalls Napoleon at Elba. The duties of a deanery are not supposed, I believe, to give absorbing employment for all the faculties of the incumbent; but an empire, however small, may be governed; and Swift at an early period set about establishing his supremacy within his small domains. He maintained his prerogatives against the archbishop, and subdued his chapter. His inferiors submitted, and could not fail to recognize his zeal for the honour of the body. But his superiors found him less amenable. He encountered episcopal authority with his old haughtiness. He bade an encroaching bishop remember that he was speaking "to a clergyman, and not to a footman."[4] He fell upon an old friend, Sterne, the Bishop of Clogher, for granting a lease to some "old fanatic knight." He takes the opportunity of reviling the bishops for favouring "two abominable bills for beggaring and enslaving the clergy (which took their birth from hell)," and says that he had thereupon resolved to have "no

[4] Bishop of Meath, May 22nd, 1719.

more commerce with persons of such prodigious grandeur, who, I feared, in a little time, would expect me to kiss their slipper."[5] He would not even look into a coach, lest he should see such a thing as a bishop—a sight that would strike him with terror. In a bitter satire he describes Satan as the bishop to whom the rest of the Irish bench are suffragans. His theory was that the English Government always appointed admirable divines, but that unluckily all the new bishops were murdered on Hounslow Heath by highwaymen, who took their robes and patents, and so usurped the Irish sees. It is not surprising that Swift's episcopal acquaintance was limited.

In his deanery Swift discharged his duties with despotic benevolence. He performed the services, carefully criticized young preachers, got his musical friends to help him in regulating his choir, looked carefully after the cathedral repairs, and improved the revenues at the cost of his own interests. His pugnacity broke out repeatedly even in such apparently safe directions. He erected a monument to the Duke of Schomberg after an attempt to make the duke's descendants pay for it themselves. He said that if they tried to avoid the duty by reclaiming the body, he would take up the bones, and put the skeleton "in his register office, to be a memorial of their baseness to all posterity."[6] He finally relieved his feelings by an epitaph, which is a bitter taunt against the duke's relations.

Happily he gave less equivocal proofs of the energy which he could put into his duties. His charity was unsurpassed both for amount and judicious distribution. Delany declares that in spite of his avarice he would give five pounds more easily than richer men would give as many

[5] To Bishop of Clogher, July, 1733.
[6] To Carteret, May 10th, 1728.

shillings. "I never," says this good authority, "saw poor so carefully and conscientiously attended to in my life as those of his cathedral." He introduced and carried out within his own domains a plan for distinguishing the deserving poor by badges—in anticipation of modern schemes for "organization of charity." With the first five hundred pounds which he possessed he formed a fund for granting loans to industrious tradesmen and citizens, to be repaid by weekly instalments. It was said that by this scheme he had been the means of putting more than 200 families in a comfortable way of living.[7] He had, says Delany, a whole "seraglio" of distressed old women in Dublin; there was scarcely a lane in the whole city where he had not such a "mistress." He saluted them kindly, inquired into their affairs, bought trifles from them, and gave them such titles as Pullagowna, Stumpa-Nympha, and so forth. The phrase "seraglio" may remind us of Johnson's establishment, who has shown his prejudice against Swift in nothing more than in misjudging a charity akin to his own, though apparently directed with more discretion. The "rabble," it is clear, might be grateful for other than political services. To personal dependents he was equally liberal. He supported his widowed sister, who had married a scapegrace in opposition to his wishes. He allowed an annuity of 52*l.* a year to Stella's companion, Mrs. Dingley, and made her suppose that the money was not a gift, but the produce of a fund for which he was trustee. He showed the same liberality to Mrs. Ridgway, daughter of his old housekeeper, Mrs. Brent; paying her an annuity of 20*l.*, and giving her a bond to secure the payment in case of accidents. Considering the narrowness of Swift's

[7] Substance of a speech to the Mayor of Dublin. Franklin left a sum of money to be employed in a similar way.

income, and that he seems also to have had considerable trouble about obtaining his rents and securing his invested savings, we may say that his so-called "avarice" was not inconsistent with unusual munificence. He pared his personal expenditure to the quick, not that he might be rich, but that he might be liberal.

Though for one reason or other Swift was at open war with a good many of the higher classes, his court was not without distinguished favourites. The most conspicuous amongst them were Delany and Sheridan. Delany (1685—1768), when Swift first knew him, was a Fellow of Trinity College. He was a scholar, and a man of much good feeling and intelligence, and eminently agreeable in society; his theological treatises seem to have been fanciful, but he could write pleasant verses, and had great reputation as a college tutor. He married two rich wives, and Swift testifies that his good qualities were not the worse for his wealth, nor his purse generally fuller. He was so much given to hospitality as to be always rather in difficulties. He was a man of too much amiability and social suavity not to be a little shocked at some of Swift's savage outbursts, and scandalized by his occasional improprieties. Yet he appreciated the nobler qualities of the staunch, if rather alarming, friend. It is curious to remember that his second wife, who was one of Swift's later correspondents, survived to be the venerated friend of Fanny Burney (1752—1840), and that many living people may thus remember one who was familiar with the latest of Swift's female favourites. Swift's closest friend and crony, however, was the elder Sheridan, the ancestor of a race fertile in genius, though unluckily his son, Swift's biographer, seems to have transmitted without possessing

any share of it. Thomas Sheridan, the elder, was the typical Irishman—kindly, witty, blundering, full of talents and imprudences, careless of dignity, and a child in the ways of the world. He was a prosperous schoolmaster in Dublin when Swift first made his acquaintance (about 1718), so prosperous as to decline a less precarious post, of which Swift got him the offer.

After the war of Wood's halfpence Swift became friendly with Carteret, whom he respected as a man of genuine ability, and who had besides the virtue of being thoroughly distrusted by Walpole. When Carteret was asked how he had succeeded in Ireland, he replied that he had pleased Dr. Swift. Swift took advantage of the mutual goodwill to recommend several promising clergymen to Carteret's notice. He was specially warm in behalf of Sheridan, who received the first vacant living and a chaplaincy. Sheridan characteristically spoilt his own chances by preaching a sermon upon the day of the accession of the Hanoverian family, from the text, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The sermon was not political, and the selection of the text a pure accident; but Sheridan was accused of Jacobitism, and lost his chaplaincy in consequence. Though generously compensated by the friend in whose pulpit he had committed this "Sheridanism," he got into difficulties. His school fell off; he exchanged his preferments for others less preferable; he failed in a school at Cavan, and ultimately the poor man came back to die at Dublin, in 1738, in distressed circumstances. Swift's relations with him were thoroughly characteristic. He defended his cause energetically; gave him most admirably good advice in rather dictatorial terms; admitted him to the closest familiarity, and sometimes lost his temper when Sheridan took a liberty

at the wrong moment, or resented the liberties taken by himself. A queer character of the "Second Solomon," written, it seems, in 1729, shows the severity with which Swift could sometimes judge his shiftless and impulsive friend, and the irritability with which he could resent occasional assertions of independence. "He is extremely proud and captious," says Swift, and "apt to resent as an affront or indignity what was never intended for either," but what, we must add, had a strong likeness to both. One cause of poor Sheridan's troubles was doubtless that assigned by Swift. Mrs. Sheridan, says this frank critic, is "the most disagreeable beast in Europe," a "most filthy slut, lazy, and slothful, luxurious, ill-natured, envious, suspicious," and yet managing to govern Sheridan. This estimate was apparently shared by her husband, who makes various references to her detestation of Swift. In spite of all jars, Swift was not only intimate with Sheridan and energetic in helping him, but to all appearance really loved him. Swift came to Sheridan's house when the workmen were moving the furniture, preparatory to his departure for Cavan. Swift burst into tears, and hid himself in a dark closet before he could regain his self-possession. He paid a visit to his old friend afterwards; but was now in that painful and morbid state in which violent outbreaks of passion made him frequently intolerable. Poor Sheridan rashly ventured to fulfil an old engagement that he would tell Swift frankly of a growing infirmity, and said something about avarice. "Doctor," replied Swift, significantly, "did you never read *Gil Blas?*" When Sheridan soon afterwards sold his school to return to Dublin, Swift received his old friend so inhospitably that Sheridan left him, never again to enter the house. Swift

indeed had ceased to be Swift; and Sheridan died soon afterwards.

Swift often sought relief from the dreariness of the deanery by retiring to, or rather by taking possession of, his friends' country-houses. In 1725 he stayed for some months, together with "the ladies," at Quilca, a small country-house of Sheridan's, and compiled an account of the deficiencies of the establishment—meant to be continued weekly. Broken tables, doors without locks, a chimney stuffed with the dean's great-coat, a solitary pair of tongs forced to attend all the fireplaces and also to take the meat from the pot, holes in the floors, spikes protruding from the bedsteads, are some of the items; whilst the servants are all thieves, and act upon the proverb, "The worse their sty, the longer they lie." Swift amused himself here and elsewhere by indulging his taste in landscape gardening, without the consent and often to the annoyance of the proprietor. In 1728—the year of Stella's death—he passed eight months at Sir Arthur Acheson's, near Market Hill. He was sickly, languid, and anxious to escape from Dublin, where he had no company but that of his "old presbyterian housekeeper, Mrs. Brent." He had, however, energy enough to take the household in hand after his usual fashion. He superintended Lady Acheson's studies, made her read to him, gave her plenty of good advice; bullied the butler; looked after the dairy and the garden, and annoyed Sir Arthur by summarily cutting down an old thorn-tree. He liked the place so much that he thought of building a house there, which was to be called Drapier's Hall, but abandoned the project for reasons which, after his fashion, he expressed with great frankness in a poem. Probably the chief reason was the very obvious one which strikes

all people who are tempted to build; but that upon which he chiefly dwells is Sir Arthur's defects as an entertainer. The knight used, it seems, to lose himself in metaphysical moonings when he should have been talking to Swift and attending to his gardens and farms. Swift entered a house less as a guest than a conqueror. His dominion, it is clear, must have become burdensome in his later years, when his temper was becoming savage and his fancies more imperious.

Such a man was the natural prey of sycophants, who would bear his humours for interested motives. Amongst Swift's numerous clients some doubtless belonged to this class. The old need of patronizing and protecting still displays itself; and there is something very touching in the zeal for his friends which survived breaking health and mental decay. His correspondence is full of eager advocacy. Poor Miss Kelly, neglected by an unnatural parent, comes to Swift as her natural adviser. He intercedes on behalf of the prodigal son of a Mr. FitzHerbert in a letter which is a model of judicious and delicate advocacy. His old friend, Barber, had prospered in business; he was Lord Mayor of London in 1733, and looked upon Swift as the founder of his fortunes. To him, "my dear good old friend in the best and worst times," Swift writes a series of letters, full of pathetic utterances of his regrets for old friends amidst increasing infirmities, and full also of appeals on behalf of others. He induced Barber to give a chaplaincy to Pilkington, a young clergyman of whose talent and modesty Swift was thoroughly convinced. Mrs. Pilkington was a small poetess, and the pair had crept into some intimacy at the deanery. Unluckily Swift had reasons to repent his patronage. The pair were equally worthless. The hus-

band tried to get a divorce; and the wife sank into misery. One of her last experiments was to publish by subscription certain "Memoirs," which contain some interesting but untrustworthy anecdotes of Swift's later years.[8] He had rather better luck with Mrs. Barber, wife of a Dublin woollendraper, who, as Swift says, was "poetically given, and, for a woman, had a sort of genius that way." He pressed her claims not only upon her namesake, the Mayor, but upon Lord Carteret, Lady Betty Germaine, and Gay and his duchess. A forged letter to Queen Caroline in Swift's name on behalf of this poetess naturally raised some suspicions. Swift, however, must have been convinced of her innocence. He continued his interest in her for years, during which we are glad to find that she gave up poetry for selling Irish linens and letting lodgings at Bath; and one of Swift's last acts before his decay was to present her, at her own request, with the copyright of his *Polite Conversations*. Everybody, she said, would subscribe for a work of Swift's, and it would put her in easy circumstances. Mrs. Barber clearly had no delicacy in turning Swift's liberality to account; but she was a respectable and sensible woman, and managed to bring up two sons to professions. Liberality of this kind came naturally to Swift. He provided for a broken-down old officer, Captain Creichton, by compiling his memoirs for him, to be published by subscription. "I never," he says in 1735, "got a farthing by anything I wrote—except once by Pope's prudent management." This probably refers to *Gulliver*, for which he seems to have received 200*l*. He apparently

[8] See also the curious letters from Mrs. Pilkington in Richardson's Correspondence.

gave his share in the profits of the *Miscellanies* to the widow of a Dublin printer.

A few words may now be said about these last writings. In reading some of them, we must remember his later mode of life. He generally dined alone, or with old Mrs. Brent, then sat alone in his closet till he went to bed at eleven. The best company in Dublin, he said, was barely tolerable, and those who had been tolerable were now unsupportable. He could no longer read by candle-light, and his only resource was to write rubbish, most of which he burnt. The merest trifles that he ever wrote, he says in 1731, "are serious philosophical lucubrations in comparison to what I now busy myself about." This, however, was but the development of a lifelong practice. His favourite maxim, *Vive la bagatelle*, is often quoted by Pope and Bolingbroke. As he had punned in his youth with Lord Berkeley, so he amused himself in later years by a constant interchange of trifles with his friends, and above all with Sheridan. Many of these trifles have been preserved; they range from really good specimens of Swift's rather sardonic humour down to bad riddles and a peculiar kind of playing upon words. A brief specimen of one variety will be amply sufficient. Sheridan writes to Swift. *Times a re veri de ad nota do it oras hi lingat almi e state.* The words separately are Latin, and are to be read into the English: "Times are very dead; not a doit or a shilling at all my estate." Swift writes to Sheridan in English, which reads into Latin, "Am I say vain a rabble is," means, *Amice venerabilis*—and so forth. Whole manuscript books are still in existence filled with jargon of this kind. Charles Fox declared that Swift must be a goodnatured man to have had such a love of nonsense. We may admit some of it to be a proof

of good-humour in the same sense as a love of the back-gammon in which he sometimes indulged. It shows, that is, a willingness to kill time in company. But it must be admitted that the impression becomes different when we think of Swift in his solitude wasting the most vigorous intellect in the country upon ingenuities beneath that of the composer of double acrostics. Delany declares that the habit helped to weaken his intellect. Rather it showed that his intellect was preying upon itself. Once more we have to think of the "conjured spirit," and the ropes of sand. Nothing can well be more lamentable. Books full of this stuff impress us like products of the painful ingenuity by which some prisoner for life has tried to relieve himself of the intolerable burden of solitary confinement. Swift seems to betray the secret when he tells Bolingbroke that at his age "I often thought of death; but now it is never out of my mind." He repeats this more than once. He does not fear death, he says; indeed he longed for it. His regular farewell to a friend was, "Good night; I hope I shall never see you again." He had long been in the habit of "lamenting" his birthday, though, in earlier days, Stella and other friends had celebrated the anniversary. Now it became a day of unmixed gloom, and the chapter in which Job curses the hour of his birth lay open all day on his table. "And yet," he says, "I love *la bagatelle* better than ever." Rather we should say, "and therefore," for in truth the only excuse for such trifling was the impossibility of finding any other escape from settled gloom. Friends indeed seem to have adopted at times the theory that a humourist must always be on the broad grin. They called him the "laughter-loving" dean, and thought Gulliver a "merry book." A strange effect is produced

when between two of the letters in which Swift utters the bitterest agonies of his soul during Stella's illness, we have a letter from Bolingbroke to the "three Yahoos of Twickenham" (Pope, Gay, and Swift), referring to Swift's "divine science, *la bagatelle*," and ending with the benediction, "Mirth be with you!" From such mirth we can only say, may heaven protect us; for it would remind us of nothing but the mirth of Redgauntlet's companions when they sat dead (and damned) at their ghastly revelry, and their laughter passed into such wild sounds as made the daring piper's "very nails turn blue."

It is not, however, to be inferred that all Swift's recreations were so dreary as this Anglo-Latin, or that his facetiousness always covered an aching heart. There is real humour, and not all of bitter flavour, in some of the trifles which passed between Swift and his friends. The most famous is the poem called *The Grand Question Debated*, the question being whether an old building called Hamilton's Bawn, belonging to Sir A. Acheson, should be turned into a malthouse or a barrack. Swift takes the opportunity of caricaturing the special object of his aversion, the blustering and illiterate soldier, though he indignantly denies that he had said anything disagreeable to his hospitable entertainer. Lady Acheson encouraged him in writing such "lampoons." Her taste cannot have been very delicate,[9] and she perhaps did not perceive how a rudeness which affects to be only playful may be really offensive. If the poem shows that Swift took liberties with his friends, it also shows that he still possessed the strange power of reproducing the strain of thought of a vulgar mind which he exhibited in Mr. Harris's petition.

[9] Or she would hardly have written the *Panegyric*.

Two other works which appeared in these last years are more remarkable proofs of the same power. *The Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation* and the *Directions to Servants*, are most singular performances, and curiously illustrative of Swift's habits of thought and composition. He seems to have begun them during some of his early visits to England. He kept them by him and amused himself by working upon them, though they were never quite finished. The *Polite Conversation* was given, as we have seen, to Mrs. Barber in his later years, and the *Directions to Servants* came into the printer's hands when he was already imbecile. They show how closely Swift's sarcastic attention was fixed through life upon the ways of his inferiors. They are a mass of materials for a natural history of social absurdities such as Mr. Darwin was in the habit of bestowing upon the manners and customs of worms. The difference is that Darwin had none but kindly feelings for worms, whereas Swift's inspection of social vermin is always edged with contempt. The conversations are a marvellous collection of the set of cant phrases which at best have supplied the absence of thought in society. Incidentally there are some curious illustrations of the customs of the day; though one cannot suppose that any human beings had ever the marvellous flow of pointless proverbs with which Lord Sparkish, Mr. Neverout, Miss Notable and the rest manage to keep the ball incessantly rolling. The talk is nonsensical, as most small-talk would be, if taken down by a reporter, and, according to modern standard, hideously vulgar, and yet it flows on with such vivacity that it is perversely amusing.

Lady Answerall. But, Mr. Neverout, I wonder why such a

handsome, straight young gentleman as you don't get some rich widow?

Lord Sparkish. Straight! Ay, straight as my leg, and that's crooked at the knee.

Neverout. Truth, madam, if it rained rich widows, none would fall upon me. Egad, I was born under a threepenny planet, never to be worth a groat.

And so the talk flows on, and to all appearance might flow for ever.

Swift professes in his preface to have sat many hundred times with his table-book ready, without catching a single phrase for his book in eight hours. Truly he is a kind of Boswell of inanities; and one is amazed at the quantity of thought which must have gone into this elaborate trifling upon trifles. A similar vein of satire upon the emptiness of writers is given in his *Tritical Essay upon the Faculties of the Human Mind;* but that is a mere skit compared with this strange performance. The *Directions to Servants* shows an equal amount of thought exerted upon the various misdoings of the class assailed. Some one has said that it is painful to read so minute and remorseless an exposure of one variety of human folly. Undoubtedly it suggests that Swift must have appeared to be an omniscient master. Delany, as I have said, testifies to his excellence in that capacity. Many anecdotes attest the close attention which he bestowed upon every detail of his servants' lives, and the humorous reproofs which he administered. "Sweetheart," he said to an ugly cookmaid who had overdone a joint, "take this down to the kitchen and do it less." "That is impossible," she replied. "Then," he said, "if you must commit faults, commit faults that can be mended." Another story tells how when a servant had excused himself for not cleaning

boots on the ground that they would soon be dirty again, Swift made him apply the same principle to eating breakfast, which would be only a temporary remedy for hunger. In this, as in every relation of life, Swift was under a kind of necessity of imposing himself upon every one in contact with him, and followed out his commands into the minutest details. In the *Directions to Servants* he has accumulated the results of his experience in one department; and the reading may not be without edification to the people who every now and then announce as a new discovery that servants are apt to be selfish, indolent, and slatternly, and to prefer their own interests to their master's. Probably no fault could be found with the modern successors of eighteenth-century servants, which has not already been exemplified in Swift's presentment of that golden age of domestic comfort. The details are not altogether pleasant; but, admitting such satire to be legitimate, Swift's performance is a masterpiece.

Swift, however, left work of a more dignified kind. Many of the letters in his correspondence are admirable specimens of a perishing art. The most interesting are those which passed between him, Pope, and Bolingbroke, and which were published by Pope's contrivance during Swift's last period. "I look upon us three," says Swift, "as a peculiar triumvirate, who have nothing to expect or fear, and so far fittest to converse with one another." We may perhaps believe Swift when he says that he "never leaned on his elbow to consider what he should write" (except to fools, lawyers, and ministers), though we certainly cannot say the same of his friends. Pope and Bolingbroke are full of affectations, now transparent enough; but Swift in a few trenchant, outspoken phrases, dashes out a portrait of himself as impressive as it is in some ways painful. We must,

indeed, remember in reading his inverse hypocrisy, his tendency to call his own motives by their ugliest names —a tendency which is specially pronounced in writing letters to the old friends whose very names recall the memories of past happiness, and lead him to dwell upon the gloomiest side of the present. There is too a characteristic reserve upon some points. In his last visit to Pope, Swift left his friend's house after hearing the bad accounts of Stella's health, and hid himself in London lodgings. He never mentioned his anxieties to his friend, who heard of them first from Sheridan; and in writing afterwards from Dublin, Swift excuses himself for the desertion by referring to his own ill-health—doubtless a true cause ("two sick friends never did well together") —and his anxiety about his affairs, without a word about Stella. A phrase of Bolingbroke's in the previous year about "the present Stella, whoever she may be," seems to prove that he too had no knowledge of Stella except from the poems addressed to the name. There were depths of feeling which Swift could not lay bare to the friend in whose affection he seems most thoroughly to have trusted. Meanwhile he gives full vent to the scorn of mankind and himself, the bitter and unavailing hatred of oppression, and above all for that strange mingling of pride and remorse which is always characteristic of his turn of mind. When he leaves Arbuthnot and Pope he expresses the warmth of his feelings by declaring that he will try to forget them. He is deeply grieved by the death of Congreve, and the grief makes him almost regret that he ever had a friend. He would give half his fortune for the temper of an easy-going acquaintance who could take up or lose a friend as easily as a cat. "Is not this the true happy man?" The

loss of Gay cuts him to the heart; he notes on the letter announcing it that he had kept the letter by him five days "by an impulse foreboding some misfortune." He cannot speak of it except to say that he regrets that long living has not hardened him; and that he expects to die poor and friendless. Pope's ill-health "hangs on his spirits." His moral is that if he were to begin the world again, he would never run the risk of a friendship with a poor or sickly man—for he cannot harden himself. "Therefore I argue that avarice and hardness of heart are the two happiest qualities a man can acquire who is late in his life, because by living long we must lessen our friends or may increase our fortunes." This bitterness is equally apparent in regard to the virtues on which he most prided himself. His patriotism was owing to "perfect rage and resentment, and the mortifying sight of slavery, folly, and baseness;" in which, as he says, he is the direct contrary of Pope, who can despise folly and hate vice without losing his temper or thinking the worse of individuals. "Oppression tortures him," and means bitter hatred of the concrete oppressor. He tells Barber in 1738 that for three years he has been but the shadow of his former self, and has entirely lost his memory, "except when it is roused by perpetual subjects of vexation." Commentators have been at pains to show that such sentiments are not philanthropic; yet they are the morbid utterance of a noble and affectionate nature soured by long misery and disappointment. They brought their own punishment. The unhappy man was fretting himself into melancholy and was losing all sources of consolation. "I have nobody now left but you," he writes to Pope in 1736; his invention is gone; he makes projects which end in the manufacture of waste paper; and what vexes him most is that his "female friends

have now forsaken him." "Years and infirmities," he says in the end of the same year (about the date of the *Legion Club*), "have quite broke me; I can neither read, nor write, nor remember, nor converse. All I have left is to walk and ride." A few letters are preserved in the next two years—melancholy wails over his loss of health and spirit—pathetic expressions of continual affection for his "dearest and almost only constant friend," and a warm request or two for services to some of his acquaintance.

The last stage was rapidly approaching. Swift who had always been thinking of death in these later years, had anticipated the end in the remarkable verses *On the Death of Dr. Swift.* This and two or three other performances of about the same period, especially the *Rhapsody on Poetry* (1733) and the *Verses to a Lady* are Swift's chief title to be called a poet. How far that name can be conceded to him is a question of classification. Swift's originality appears in the very fact that he requires a new class to be made for him. He justified Dryden's remark in so far as he was never a poet in the sense in which Milton or Wordsworth or Shelley or even Dryden himself were poets. His poetry may be called rhymed prose, and should perhaps be put at about the same level in the scale of poetry as *Hudibras.* It differs from prose not simply in being rhymed, but in that the metrical form seems to be the natural and appropriate mode of utterance. Some of the purely sarcastic and humorous phrases recall *Hudibras* more nearly than anything else; as, for example, the often-quoted verses upon small critics in the *Rhapsody.*

> The vermin only tease and pinch
> Their foes superior by an inch

So, naturalists observe a flea
Has smaller fleas that on him prey,
And these have smaller still to bite 'em,
And so proceed *ad infinitum*.

In the verses on his own death, the suppressed passion, the glow and force of feeling which we perceive behind the merely moral and prosaic phrases seem to elevate the work to a higher level. It is a mere running of every-day language into easy-going verse; and yet the strangely mingled pathos and bitterness, the peculiar irony of which he was the great master, affect us with a sentiment which may be called poetical in substance, more forcibly than far more dignified and in some sense imaginative performances. Whatever name we may please to give to such work, Swift has certainly struck home and makes an impression which it is difficult to compress into a few phrases. It is the essence of all that is given at greater length in the correspondence; and starts from a comment upon Rochefoucauld's congenial maxim about the misfortunes of our friends. He tells how his acquaintance watch his decay, tacitly congratulating themselves that "it is not yet so bad with us;" how, when he dies, they laugh at the absurdity of his will.

To public uses! there's a whim!
What had the public done for him?
Mere envy, avarice, and pride,
He gave it all—but first he died.

Then we have the comments of Queen Caroline and Sir Robert and the rejoicings of Grub Street at the chance of passing off rubbish by calling it his. His friends are really touched.

Poor Pope will grieve a month, and Gay
A week, and Arbuthnot a day,
St. John himself will scarce forbear
To bite his pen and drop a tear,
The rest will give a shrug and cry,
"'Tis pity, but we all must die!"

The ladies talk over it at their cards. They have learnt to show their tenderness, and

Receive the news in doleful dumps.
The dean is dead (pray what is trumps?);
Then, Lord have mercy on his soul!
(Ladies, I'll venture for the *vole*).

The poem concludes, as usual, with an impartial character of the dean. He claims, with a pride not unjustifiable, the power of independence, love of his friends, hatred of corruption and so forth; admits that he may have had "too much satire in his vein," though adding the very questionable assertion that he "lashed the vice but spared the name." Marlborough, Wharton, Burnet, Steele, Walpole and a good many more might have had something to say upon that head. The last phrase is significant,—

He gave the little wealth he had
To build a house for fools and mad;
And showed by one satiric touch
No nation needed it so much,
That kingdom he hath left his debtor,
I wish it soon may have a better!

For some years, in fact, Swift had spent much thought and time in arranging the details of this bequest. He ultimately left about 12,000*l*., with which, and some other

contributions, St. Patrick's Hospital was opened for fifty patients in the year 1757.

The last few years of Swift's life were passed in an almost total eclipse of intellect. One pathetic letter to Mrs. Whiteway gives almost the last touch. "I have been very miserable all night, and to-day extremely deaf and full of pain. I am so stupid and confounded that I cannot express the mortification I am under both of body and mind. All I can say is that I am not in torture; but I daily and hourly expect it. Pray let me know how your health is and your family. I hardly understand one word I write. I am sure my days will be very few, for miserable they must be. If I do not blunder, it is Saturday, July 26, 1740. If I live till Monday, I shall hope to see you, perhaps for the last time." Even after this he occasionally showed gleams of his former intelligence, and is said to have written a well-known epigram during an outing with his attendants :—

> Behold a proof of Irish sense!
> Here Irish wit is seen!
> When nothing's left that's worth defence
> They build a magazine.

Occasionally he gave way to furious outbursts of violent temper; and once suffered great torture from a swelling in the eye. But his general state seems to have been apathetic; sometimes he tried to speak, but was unable to find words. A few sentences have been recorded. On hearing that preparations were being made for celebrating his birthday, he said, "It is all folly; they had better let it alone." Another time he was heard to mutter, "I am what I am; I am what I am." Few details have been given of this sad period of mental eclipse; nor can we

regret their absence. It is enough to say that he suffered occasional tortures from the development of the brain-disease; though as a rule he enjoyed the painlessness of torpor. The unhappy man lingered till the 19th of October, 1745, when he died quietly at three in the afternoon, after a night of convulsions. He was buried in St. Patrick's Cathedral, and over his grave was placed an epitaph, containing the last of those terrible phrases which cling to our memory whenever his name is mentioned. Swift lies, in his own words,—

Ubi sæva indignatio
Cor ulterius lacerare nequit.

What more can be added?

INDEX.

Academy, proposed English, 106
Acheson, Lady, 121, 194, 199
Acheson, Sir A., 121, 194, 199
Addison, intimacy with Swift, begins 1705, 57, 78; closes 1711, 112
Arachne and Pallas, 151
Arbuthnot, 105, 118, 168, 174, 179, 203
Argument to prove the Inconvenience of Abolishing Christianity, 45, 70
Atlantis, Bacon's, 175

Barber, Lord Mayor, 195
Barrett, Rev. J., vii
Battle of the Books, 33-36; Swift a light skirmisher, 33; his argument recoils on him, 35; the best of the travesties, 36
Baucis and Philemon, 58
Bentley, 35
Berkeley, Earl of, 51, 54
Berkeley, George, 4, 104, 166-167
Bettesworth, Serjeant, 161
Bickerstaff, Isaac, 59
Biographies of Swift, v-vii
Bolingbroke. *See* St. John
Boyle, 35
Brent, Mrs., 190
Brothers' Club, The, 104-106
Bucknill, Dr., vii, 143
Burlington, Lady, 120
Burnet, Bishop, 66, 111, 113
Burney, Fanny, 191

"Cad," 133
Cadenus and Vanessa, 128, 133, 137, 144
Carteret, Lord, 157, 158, 192, 196
Catholic Reasons for Repealing the Test, 148 note
Celbridge, 130, 131, 136
Chelsea, Swift at, 94, 128
Coffee-houses, 56
Conduct of the Allies, 98, 100, 107
Conformity, Bill against occasional, 66, 96
Congreve, 4, 21, 32, 56, 104, 203
Congreve, Epistle to, 32
Coutray, 37
Coxe, Archdeacon, 154
Craftsman, the, 162
Crisis, the, 113

Davenant, 103
Death of Dr. Swift, On the, 205-207
Defoe, Daniel, 66, 83
Delany, Dr. P., 191
Dingley, Mrs., 28, 53, 80, 190
Directions to Servants, 200, 201, 202
Discourse on the Dissensions in Athens, etc., 65
Drapier's Letters, 152, 163, 166
Dryden, 1, 32, 35
Dryden, Elizabeth, 1

Eclipse, Swift and the, 161

Essay on the Fates of Clergymen, 16
Examiner, the, 87-93

Farnham, 21, 26
Faulkner, Mr., 20
"Figgarkick Solly," 124
Forster, W. E., *Life of Swift*, vii, 123
Free Thoughts on the Present State of Affairs, 114, 115
Friend, Mr., 102

Gay, 168, 186
Germaine, Lady Betty, 54, 196
Giffard, Lady, 14, 28
Godolphin, 32, 96
"Golden Farmer," the, 124
Grand Question Debated, The, 199
"*Guardian*," *importance of the, considered*, 113
Guardian, the, 112
Guiscard, 93
Gulliver's Travels, instantaneous success, 170; its charm for the young, 171, 173; affinity with other works, 171, 172, 175; ferocity of the later books, 173, 179, 183; objects of the satire, 174; Hazlitt's view of *Gulliver*, 175-178; Swift's contempt for human nature, 177-178; his morbid interest in the physically disgusting, 89, 179-182

Halifax, 73, 82
Harley Administration, the, 77-117
Harley, becomes Chancellor of the Exchequer, 80; his character, 83; offers Swift a bribe, 85; is stabbed by Guiscard, 93; becomes Earl of Oxford, 94; Swift's affection for Harley, 94, 116; Harley and St. John, 109, 114; Harley's fall, 117
Harrison, Mr., 103
Hawkesworth, *Life of Swift*, vi
Hazlitt, 176-178
History of the Last Four Years of Queen Anne, 107
Howard, Mrs., 162
Hudibras, 205

Indulgences, Papal, 41

Jacobitism, 62, 63
Johnson, Dr., *Life of Swift*, vi; criticism of *Gulliver*, 172
Johnson, Esther. *See* Stella
Johnson, Mrs., 28
Jones, Betty, 11
Journal to Stella. *See* Stella

Kelly, Miss, 195
Kendal, Duchess of, 154
Kennett, Bishop, 101, 103
Kerry, Lady, 125
Kilkenny School, 4
Kilroot, 24, 29, 33
King, Archbishop, 26, 67, 73, 78

Laracor, 26, 51, 53, 79
Legion Club, the, 164, 205
Leicester, 4, 10, 11, 12
Letcombe, Upper, 114, 128
"Little language," 123, 125
Lloyd, Owen, 8
London society in 1700, 56
Long, Anne, 120, 121

Macaulay, Lord, 126
Marlborough, Duchess of, 170
Marlborough, Duke of, 90-92, 96, 100
Masham, Mrs., 97, 99
Mason, W. Monck, *Life of Swift*, vi, 134 note
Maxims Controuled in Ireland, 165
Micromegas (Voltaire's), 172
Miscellanies, the, 169, 197
Modest Proposal, the, 164-165
Moor Park, 14, 24-26
More's *Utopia*, 175
Mr. Collins's *Discourse of Free-thinking*, 46

Nottingham, 96, 98

October Club, the, 93, 115
Ormond, Duke of, 54
Orrery, Lord, *Life of Swift*, v, 53, 136
Oudenarde, 60
Oxford, Earl of. *See* Harley

Palmerston, Lord, 30
Parnell, 103-104, 168
Partridge, 59-60
Pembroke, Lord, 55, 73
Pendarves, Mrs., 121
Petition of Mrs. Frances Harris, 55, 199
"Pilgarlick," 124
Pilkington, Mrs., 195, 196 note
Pindaric Odes, 32
"Podefar," 124
Polite Conversations, 196, 200
Pope, 161, 168, 169, 202
Portland, Earl of, 20
Prior, 95, 96, 105
Progress of Marriage, 144
Project for the Advancement of Religion, 70

Quebec, 97
Queen Anne, death of, 116; politics in the reign of, 61-66
Queen Anne's Bounty, 67
Queensberry, Duchess of, 15, 121
Quilca, 194

Revolution of 1688, 10
Rhapsody on Poetry, 205
Rivers, Lord, 86, 90
Roger (Swift's clerk), 54
Rowe, 104

Sacheverell, Dr., 79, 107
Schomberg, Duke of, 189
Scott, Sir W., *Life of Swift*, vi, 43, 139
Scriblerus Club, 168
"Second Solomon," the, 193
Sentiments of a Church of England Man, 70, 71-72
Servants, Swift and his, 121, 159, 190
Sharpe, Archbishop, 42
Sheridan (the elder), 191-193, 197
Sheridan, T. (the younger), vi, 5
Shrewsbury, Duke of, 101
"Skinage," 133
Somers, 57, 66, 68, 82, 90, 92
Somerset, Duchess of, 93, 97, 99, 108
Somerset, Duke of, 100
Southwell, Sir R., 18, 19, 23
Spectator, the, 112
Steele, intimacy with Swift, 57; protected by him, 104; rupture with, 111, 113
Stella, her parentage, 28; goes to Ireland, 53; offer of marriage from Tisdall, 122-123; nature of her intimacy with Swift, 124-127, 135-136, 140-143; her supposed secret marriage to Swift, 134; illness and death, 137-139
Stella, Journal to, its character, 80-82; ciphers and phrases in, 124; little language, 123, 125; impromptu proverbs, 126
St. John, intimacy with Swift, 84-86; strained relations with Harley, 109, 114; treason, 110; his fall, 117
Swift, Deane, *Life of Swift*, v
Swift, Godwin, 2, 4, 6, 9
Swift, Jonathan, parentage, 1-2; date of birth, 3; goes to Kilkenny School, 4; enters Trinity College, Dublin, 5; early recklessness, 8; flies to England, 10; devotion to his mother, 10; becomes amanuensis to Sir W. Temple, 12; position at Moor Park, 14-16; early ill-health, 18, 143; goes to Oxford, 19; rupture with Temple, 22; takes orders and goes to Kilroot, 24; "Varina," 25; passion for exercise, 26, 27, 56, 94; reading, 27, 28; attitude towards chil-

dren, 31, 164-165; his friendships, 31, 103, 203-204; early writings, 32-50; *Battle of the Books*, 33-36; *Tale of a Tub*, 36-44; Swift's prejudices, 44; his attitude towards free-thought, 47; his pessimism, 49; becomes chaplain to Lord Berkeley, 51; Laracor, 51; rupture with Varina, 52; intimacy with Irish viceroys, 54, 55, 60; visits to London, 55-56; intimacy with Addison and Steele, 57, 58; love of practical jokes, 59, 60; hatred of the Dutch, 64; and Scotch, 64, 72, 114, 148; takes up cause of Irish clergy, 68; separation from Whig party, 74, 75; unsatisfied ambition, 77-79; *Journal to Stella*, 80-82, 123-127; intimacy with Harley and St. John, 83-87; the *Examiner*, 87-93; culminating point of Swift's career, 100; blustering self-assertion, 101-103; Swift's parsimony, 106, 141, 187; his splendid charity, 142, 189; proposal to found an English academy, 106; appointed Dean of St. Patrick's, 109; rupture with Addison and Steele, 111-113; affection for Harley, 94, 116; despair after his fall, 118-119; relations to women, 120-122; Stella, 124-127, 135-136, 140-143; supposed marriage, 134; Vanessa, 127-137; rupture with Vanessa, 136; ill-health and premonitions of insanity, 144; returns to politics, 147; attitude towards Irish unrest, 147; Wood's halfpence, 151-160; *Gulliver's Travels*, 169; last writings, 197-202; death, 209; his epitaph, 209

Swift's poetry, rhymed prose, 205; always plain matter of fact, 178; Dryden's criticism, 32, 205; indifference to literary form, 58; verses on his own death, 206-207

Swift's politics, a High Church Whig, 61-63; anti-Jacobite, 62; sympathy with Tories, 64; tempted to join them, 66; his churchmanship a bar to preferment, 70; leaves the Whig party, 74; intimacy with Harley and St. John (1710-1714), 82-117; unique position as a political writer, 86; the *Examiner*, 87-93; anti-militarism, 92; ignorance of back-stair plots, 110; view of Irish unrest, 148-151

Swift's religion, doubts of his orthodoxy, 42, 108; attitude towards religious abuses, 43-44; towards free-thought, 46, 47; his sermons, 47; political view of religion, 49; pessimism, 50; "Dearly beloved Roger," 53; Swift as a parish priest, 48, 54; as Dean, 188-189

Swift, Mrs., 10-11

Swift, Thomas (Swift's grandfather), 1-2

Swift, Thomas (Swift's cousin), 7, 28

Swift, William, 9

Swift, Willoughby, 9, 23

Tale of a Tub, a challenge to pedantry, 37; Swift's own verdict on it, 37; curious hint of authorship, 38; argument of the *Tale*, 40-43; indulgences, 41; transubstantiation, 42; doubts of his orthodoxy, 42, 108; object of Swift's satire, 43

Tatler, the, 103

Temple, John, 14

Temple, Lady, 14

Temple, Sir W., 12-31; his character, 13, 17-18; Swift's tribute to him, 17, 29; his death, 25, 29

Test Acts, the, 69, 75, 163

Teufelsdröckh, Herr, 38
Tisdall, Mr., 122-123, 127, 135
Transubstantiation, 42
Triennial Bill, the, 20
Trim, 51, 54

Vanessa, her character and appearance, 129; passion for Swift, 129-130, 132, 145; nature of her relations with him, 131-135; final rupture and death of Vanessa, 136
Vanhomrigh, Miss. *See* Vanessa
Vanhomrighs, the, 127-128
"Varina," 25, 52, 129, 141
Vaughan, Thomas, 39 note
Verses to a Lady, 205
Voltaire, 43, 172

Walpole, Sir R., 149, 152, 161, 162
Waring, Miss. *See* "Varina"
Wharton, 69, 73, 87, 89
Wharton, Short Character of Thomas, Earl of, 8
Whig Examiner, 87
Whigs, Public Spirit of the, 113
Whitehaven, 3
Whiteway, Mrs. V., 139 note, 188, 208
Whitshed, Chief Justice, 151, 159
Wilde, Sir W. R., vii, 143
William III., 19-20
Windsor, 95
Windsor Prophecy, the, 99, 105
Wood's halfpence: Swift and the Irish, 148-151; objection to the halfpence, 153-154; sophistry of Swift's arguments, 155-156; surrender of the patent, 159; Swift's popularity, 160-161
Wotton, 35, 38
Wycombe, 95, 104

Yahoos of Twickenham, 199
Young, 144

THE END

Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh*.

DATE DUE

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305